A POSING QUESTION,

PUT

By the Wiſe man, *viz.* *SOLOMON*, to the Wiſeſt men.

Concerning making a JUDGMENT of

TEMPORAL CONDITIONS.

WHEREIN YOU HAVE

The Ignorance of Man (in knowing, What is Good, or Evil, for man in this Life) DISCOVERED; Together, with the Miſtakes that flow from it: And the great Queſtion RESOLVED, *viz.* Whether the Knowledg of, What is Good for a man in this Life, be ſo hid from Man, that no man can attain it.

Preached at the Weekly Lecture at *Upton* upon *Severn*, in the County of *Worceſter*, by BENJAMIN BAXTER, late Miniſter of the Goſpel there.

Eccleſ. 9. 1. No man knoweth either Love or Hatred, by what is before him.

Eccleſ. 5. 13. There is a ſore Evil I have ſeen under the Sun, namely, Riches, Kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt.

Pſal. 119. 71. It is good for me that I have been Afflicted.

LONDON,
Printed for *John Jones*, Bookſeller in *Worceſter*, 1662.

1662
B354

To the much

HONOURED,

AND TRULY

VERTUOUS,

Mrs. *PENELOPE LECHMERE*;

Wife to *Nicholas Lechmere*, of

HANLY-CASTLE, Eſq;

Madam,

AS nothing is more uſual, then for thoſe, who write Books, to Dedicate them to ſome Perſon or other: So it's as uſual with thoſe that do it, to make known to the World, the Reaſon of ſuch their Dedication; and, Why to ſuch a Perſon.

Among other reaſons, none are more frequently alleadged, then Eminent Favours received. *Madam*, If I would make theſe the Reaſons of my Dedicating this Book to you, it were ſufficient to ſatisfy any, Why I have pitched upon you, rather then upon another. I could tell the World, What a grear Debtor you have me to you, eſpecially in this day, wherein the Hand of the Lord hath been, and ſtill is, very heavy upon me: You have been a Nurſe, and very much of a Phyſitian to me; You have miniſtred to my Neceſſities; You have often cheared me with your Viſits; Yea, you left not, till you had found out, an Able and Eminent Phyſitian, and brought him to me, under whoſe hands I at preſent am, waiting upon God for the Iſſue. Certainly, theſe are Favours that are not to be forgotten; and might very well be alleadged, as

the Reaſon of my Dedicating this inconſiderable Peece to you. But, *Madam*, under favour, I muſt tell you and the world, that this Dedication, neither reſpecteth, nor relates to, any of theſe. The only Reaſon, is, truly this, That there is none, can claim ſuch an Intereſt in the Book, as your ſelf; and if it be worth ſeeing the Light, you muſt be thanked for it. You were the Perſon, who, for ſome years laſt paſt, did with much importunity, ſolicit me to the Printing and Publiſhing of theſe Sermons; You reſted not, till you had obtained a promiſe from me, of doing it; When my Copy was finiſhed, you were impatient till it were ſent to the Preſs; and when it was in the Preſs, in all your inquiries after it, you were pleaſed to Stile it by the Name of *Your Book*. So many wayes have you been pleaſed to make it your own, that I

ſhould have wronged you very much, if I ſhould have denied you, the right you have to it. And now *Madam*, having given you this accompt of the Reaſon of my Dedicating this Book to you, I ſhall next give you, a brief accompt of the Book it ſelf. It Treats of a Subject, which few or none (that I know of) have written of, (I mean) ſo as to make it the ſole Subject, of a full and juſt Diſcourſe. It is a Subject, that Univerſally reſpecteth all, of what Degree or Quality ſoever, High and Low, Rich and Poor; yea, the Higheſt, and the Loweſt; The King that Sits upon the Throne, and the Beggar that ſits upon the Dunghill. GOD, The Great Founder, and Framer of Conditions, hath not made all men, equal and alike in reſpect of Stature, (*Saul*, was taller than the people, by the head and ſhoulders) no more hath he made all equall, in

re-

reſpect of their outward and temporal Condition. Some he ſetteth upon Mountains, and placeth others in the Vallies: And, when He pleaſeth, He bids ſome that were ſet on High, Come down from your Mountains, and ſit below; as He did *Job*: And others that ſit Below, He bids ſit up Higher. Thus Providence delighteth many times, to make men change places, and to poure them from Veſſel to Veſſel, (I mean) out of one condition into another. The great thing we have to do in every Condition, is, (ſo far as is poſſible) to enquire into it, Whether it be Good for us or no. Here is the great miſtake of men, that they look no further than on the Surface and outſide of their Condition; and if they find that to be Gawdy and Gliſtring, in their own eyes, They preſently ſay, as thoſe Diſciples did in another caſe, *It is*

good for us to be here. As on the contrary, If the outſide of their condition ſeemeth Ugly and Deformed, they preſently conclude, it's Evil for them to be in that condition. The ſcope of this Book, is to rectify theſe miſtakes, by teaching us to View the inſide, as well as the outſide of a condition; by ſetting us ſeriouſly upon ſearching out (ſo far as it may be known of us, letting the hidden myſteries of Providence alone) What the minde and meaning of God towards us, in every condition, is. In a word, the ſcope of it, is likewiſe this, To teach men, ſo to improve their temporal conditions, as to make them advantagious to them, in relation to an Eternal one. Ere-long, temporal Conditions ſhall be no more, with their Differences and Diſtinctions, of High and Low, Rich and Poor: But all Men, and Women, ſhall

ſhall be put into one and the ſame Condition, of Miſery, or Glory; and ſhall be, there, fixed to all Eternity. The Lord keep us, from loſing our ſelves in our Earthly Conditions, ſo as not to eye that Condition that is Heavenly: That while we lie ſucking ſweetneſs, out of the gawdy Flowers of a Condition, we forget not to conſider, What our Condition will be hereafter; into which, erelong, all of us ſhall be Tranſlated.

Madam, The Book I preſent you with, is coming into the World; when the Author, is, in all probability, going out of it. Be pleaſed to accept of it, as a poor Legacy bequeathed to you, by a Dying man; who yet, while he liveth, muſt Subſcribe himſelf,

MADAM,

Feb. 21. 1661.

Your very much obliged Servant,

BEN. BAXTER.

TO THE
READER.

Chriſtian Reader,

I Have a Concurrence of many Reaſons, to make me willing to commend this Book, to thy thankful Acceptance, and diligent Peruſal.

1. In *General*, Good Books are now of greater uſe, than ſometime formerly they have been: So many Congregations are Deſtitute of Able Faithful Teachers, that *Books* are the more neceſſary; and are now, an unvaluable Mercy to this Land. It is one inſtance, in which the Doctrine of this Treatiſe hath been Verified to my ſelf. I once was tempted to *Repent*, that I had written ſo much my ſelf, and to blame others that did imitate me, and trouble the world with ſuch

ſuch a crowd of Books: But God told not me, what Changes He would make: And *who knoweth what is good for man*, when Providence concealeth much that is neceſſary to the Determination. Little thought I, That *God* was ſo ſuddenly removing ſo many faithful Guides, and bringing thouſands into ſuch a caſe, in which, Books muſt be their moſt learned, able, powerful Teachers! O what a mercy is it, that even the Poor, may keep ſuch *Preachers* in their houſes, at ſo cheap *a rate*! That at Home, they may thus have an *excellent Sermon* when they pleaſe! That they may (yet) without Penalties, hear theſe *ſilent Preachers*, that are Orthodox, Methodical, Impartial, not bending to the Luſts, and Carnal Intereſts of Men: That at home, you may hear a Preacher that will not flatter you, nor raile at thoſe, that are not for the Intereſt of a Faction; nor by a beaſtly debauched Life, unſay his Doctrine: That by reading *more* or *leſs*, you may avoid the offence, of the *length* or *ſhortneſs* of the *Sermon*: That you may chooſe the Subject, moſt pertinent to your caſe, and the Diſcourſe that for the manner is moſt ſuited to your Edification! That when you cannot come to a Powerful *Preacher*, you may, at any time, read a *heart-*

warm-

warming book: That when you want underſtanding and expreſſion, prudently to inſtruct your Families, and exhort your near Relations, or your Neighbours, you may read to them, or lend them, a Book that is beſt ſuited to their State. I think, Much of the work of God in *England*, for mens Converſion, Confirmation, and Conſolation, is now to be carried on by *Books*.

And though I know ſome get them, but as *Hangings* or *Pictures*, to Adorn their Rooms, (*ut Petrach.*) *Alii voluptati, alii jactantiæ libros quærunt; ſunt qui hac parte ſupellectilis exornant thalamos, quæ animis ornandis inventa eſt, neque aliter his utuntur quam Corinthii vaſis, & tabulis pictis, ac ſtatuis, &c.*) yet, when they are extant, who knoweth whoſe hands they may fall into: And how many by ſuch Books, as unexpectedly have fallen into their hands, have bin brought to true Repentance and Salvation.

And it is a great Mercy, that we have ſuch a multitude of Books, that all *agree* in the *neceſſary unqueſtionable Truths* of our Religion; when it is a thing ſo dangerous to read Books againſt Books, Errors againſt Truth; and [*Libri quoſdam ad ſcientiam, quoſdam ad inſaniam perduxêre*] ſome

ſome are made *Wiſe*, and ſome made *Mad*, by reading Books: And when diverſity, and contrariety, ſo diſtract men, as abundance of Croſs-wayes do a Traveller. (*ut Petr.*) *Fallit ſæpe viarum multiplicitas viatorem; et qui uno calle certus ibat, hæret in bivio; multoque major trivii eſt error, aut quadrivii: ſic ſæpe qui librum unum efficaciter elegiſſet, inutiliter multos aperuit evolvitque.*)

The Papiſts remedy againſt the hurt of ill Books, is to deny us the uſe of *good ones*: Their remedy againſt the miſcheifs of *errors*, is to keep men without knowledg of the Truth; and to cure ſquinting to put out our eyes: To eſcape the danger of *miſunderſtanding* the Scriptures, to keep them from *underſtanding* them, and to lock them up in an unknown Tongue, and to fly from them, becauſe, they are abuſed by Hereticks: As if Chriſt ſhould not have ſaid *again*, [*It is Written*] becauſe, the Devil had ſaid, [*It is Written*]. But of the *two* Evils, the Vanity is more tolerable, of them that glory in their excellent *Libraries*; or of *Sabinus*, in *Seneca*, that boaſted of his *learned Servants*; or the Great Men, that glory in their learned *Chaplains*, while they are ignorant *themſelves*; than

the

the *Villany* of *Licinius*, that called *learning*, *The Peſt and Poiſon of the Common-Wealth*: Or the *Italian Noble Man that* Petrach *mentioneth, that would give a very great ſumme of mony, to keep all men of Learning, from ever coming into his Country*; Or the impiety of them, that would baniſh the knowledg of the Scriptures, from the laity in the Church of God.

Fuit nuper, non in agris, nec in ſylvis, ſed in maxima, florentiſſimaque, et (quod ſtupeas) urbe Italiæ, neque is Paſtor, aratorve, ſed vir nobilis, magnique apud cives ſuos loci, qui juravit ſe magno pretio empturum, nequis unquam ſuam patriam literatus intraret: Ovox ſaxei pectoris! Petr. *Perhaps it was ſome Pope of* Rome.

2. And from the *matter* and *manner* of this *Treatiſe*, I have more ſpecial Reaſons to take the publication of it for a Mercy. The *Subject* is very *ſuitable* and *ſeaſonable* in theſe times, when Providence ſporteth it ſelf in the affairs of men, and puzzeleth ſo many, and is ſo *variouſly interpreted* by the *beſt*, and *miſinterpreted* by the *moſt*. This Doctrine of *mans uncertainty of what is for his good*, in the matters of temporal concernment, or of the *diſengaged Providence of God*, is not any where elſe ſo fully and methodically handled that I know of. And it is of very great uſe, to the correcting of *many*, and *great* miſcarriages, and the

the right ordering of our *affections* and *imployments* in the world. How unreaſonable is it, That we ſhould be ſo eager and peremptory in our deſires of that, which we *know not*, Whether it will do us *good* or *hurt*. That we ſhould be ſo paſſionately troubled, for thoſe paſſages of God's Providence, which, for ought we know, may be the means of our felicity. O how oft do we *fooliſhly trouble our ſelves*, becauſe *God is ſaving us* from *greater trouble*, and we do not underſtand His meaning! Strange! that the knowledg of our *nothingneſs*, and the experience of the *fruits* of our miſcarriages, will not yet perſwade us, to give God leave to Govern the World, without our medling, or ſeeking to take his Work into our hands, and cenſuring of that, which we never underſtood! That we have not yet enough, of the deſire of *being as gods*; having ſmarted for it, as we have done! O the folly of thoſe Expoſitors of the Prophecies of Scripture, who firſt *overvalue a proſperous ſtate*, and conclude beyond their knowledg, that it is *beſt for us*; and then reduce the Promiſes to their ſenſe; and grow ſo confident in their expectations, of outward deliverances and proſperous times, as to lay their hopes and com-

comforts on it, and the very credit of Religion it ſelf! And ô the madneſs of thoſe men, that laying this as their ground work, that fleſhly Proſperity is beſt for them, are unreconcilable to the wayes of Faith and Holineſs, and Mortification, becauſe they ſquare not with this Erroneous Foundation.

Theſe Generalls we are certain of; *Firſt*, That ordinarily Adverſity, is more profitable to the Soul, then worldly Proſperity. *Secondly*, That *all things ſhall work together for good, to them that love God.* And therefore we have reaſon to be *moſt ſuſpicious* of *Proſperity*; but, if we are true Chriſtians, to interpret all well that is of God.

Did we but know what need we have of *mortifying Providences*, as the ordinary means of *mortifying Grace*, we ſhould rightlier judg of them, then we do. *Tanto quiſque ferramentum medici patientius tolerat, quanto magis putridum conſpicit eſſe quod ſecat.*] Saith *Greg.* *He that beſt knowes the rottenneſs of the fleſh, will beſt endure the Surgions knife.* And happy are we, if that be *cured* by the *pain* of the *fleſh*, which was *corrupted* by the *pleaſure* of the *fleſh*: [*Si quæ carnis delectatione peccamus, carnis dolore purgamus*:] Mar-

Marvel not, if, when thou turneſt unto Chriſt, thou ſeemeſt to be aſſaulted with ſucceſſive Waves, and to be caſt into a Furnace, or brought into a Thorny Wilderneſs, and compaſſed with Sorrows, which thou never waſt acquainted with before: As *Auguſtine* to his friend, [*Noli admirari frater, ſi, poſtquam Chriſtianus effectus es, mille te undique tribulationes vexant: Quoniam Chriſtus noſtræ Religionis caput eſt; noſque ejus membra ſumus; debemus ergo non ſolum eum, ſed ejus vitam cumulatiſſimè ſequi.*] *Chriſts* way, muſt be *our* way; we muſt be conformed to our Head: We muſt *Suffer with him*, if we will be *Glorified with him:* The *Croſs*, is the paſſage to the *Crown*. The Armies of Saints, have gone this way in all Generations. [*Similes aliorum reſpice caſus—Mitiùs iſta feres.*] *Ov.* Should we expect that Grace ſhould have no Conflict, no Conqueſt before the Triumph; but be Crown'd, before we have ſhewed what it can do? Nay, we know not the power of it in *our ſelves*, till it be tried. [*Nemo ſcit, quid potueris; neque tu quidem ipſe: Opus enim eſt ad ſui notitiam experimento: Quid quiſque poſſit, non niſi tentando didicit*, inquit *Seneca.*]

Be not therefore too unmannerly, and fooliſhly importunate with God for any outward thing, till thou not only thinkeſt that at the preſent it would do thee good, but alſo canſt ſee as far as to the *end*, and ſay, That it will be *in the iſſue good*, and will not *croſs* any *greater Good*. And marvel not, if God grant not ſuch miſtaking Prayers. *Non audit medicus ad voluntatem, ſed ad ſanitatem*, ſaith *Auguſt*.

What ſickly tempers ſhould we be of, yea, what certain death would follow, if our Father and Phyſitian, ſhould dyet us as we deſire, and give us what we would have our ſelves? It ſeems a hard ſaying of *Auguſtine*, of Rich men; *Difficile, imo impoſſibile, eſt, ut præſentibus et futuris quis fruatur Bonis: ut hic ventrem, et ibi mentem impleat; ut à deliciis ad delicias tranſeat; ut in utroque ſeculo primus ſit; ut in terra et in cœlo appareat glorioſus: It is hard, yea impoſſible, to enjoy both preſent and future Goods: to ſatisfy the belly here, and the mind hereafter; to paſſe from pleaſures unto pleaſures: to be a chief man in both worlds; to be glorious both in Earth and in Heaven.*] But it meaneth no more than Chriſt meant, in *Luk.* 16. 25. & 18. 25.

O how great a Victory do they get, that over-

overcome the temptations of Proſperity. *Magnæ virtutis eſt cum fœlicitate luctari; et magnæ fœlicitatis eſt à fœlicitate non vinci: Aug.* How few are ſo happy, who have that which the world counteth happineſs, as to eſcape its ſting, and the everlaſting miſery, which living after the fleſh will procure, *Rom.* 8. 1, 13.

Heu cæcæ mentes, tumefactaque corda ſecundis!

This maketh the Great ones of the world, to be the Object of grief and compaſſion to the Wiſe, and cloudeth their Honour, and maketh them uſually eſteemed the miſerableſt men alive, becauſe they are uſually the worſt, through the Surfeits which they take from worldly fulneſs, and the alienation of their minds from God and Heaven, through the prevalence of fleſhly pleaſures: For he is the worſt man, that is moſt Earthly and leaſt Heavenly; that hath moſt of the World, and leaſt of God upon his heart: Eſpecially, when the Leproſy of the moſt brutiſh Senſuality, and ſtinking Luſts, and drunken Pride, and ſavage Cruelty, are the Symptoms of this Pernicious Diſeaſe.

Luxuriant animi rebus plerumque ſecundis.

Saith *Lactantius*, *Ex Proſperitate oritur luxuria; ex luxuriâ verò, vitia omnia: ſic impietas adverſus Deum naſcitur.*] *Luxurie ſpringeth from Proſperity, and all Vices from Luxurie: And thus impiety againſt God is generated.*

And it frequently maketh the Proſperous ſo *Drunk*, that they need no other enemy: their Diſeaſe deſtroyeth them, they reel unto their Ruine. Saith *Seneca*, *Res eſt inquieta Fœlicitas, ipſa ſe exagitat, movet cerebrum: non uno genere alios in aliud irritat. Et alibi: Multarum urbium in ipſo flore luxurioſa imperia ceciderunt, et quicquid virtute paratum erat, intemperantiâ corruit.*

Seeing then that *worldly proſperity* is uſually ſo *pernicious*, and we can never ſay before hand, That it is for *our good*: How unmeet is it, that we ſhould inordinately deſire it, or think we are undone when adverſity is our lot? Why ſeek we that fulneſs or greatneſs, which hath, as *Auguſtine* ſpeaks, *Aſperitatem veram, jucunditatem falſam, certum dolorem, incertam voluptatem, durum laborem, timidam quietem;*

rem

rem plenam miſeriæ, ſpem beatitudinis inanem: That is, *a true aſperity, a falſe delight; a certain pain, an uncertain pleaſure; a hard labour, a fearful reſt; a buſineſs full of miſery; and a hope that is empty of true felicity.*] And, as a leaf, it ſhakes with every wind: Internal Gripes, External Rumors; and a thouſand Accidents, turn their ſeeming Paradiſe into a Hell: *Adeò perexigua ſunt, quæ fortunatiſſimis ſummam beatitudinis detrahunt,* ſaith *Seneca.* For, as he ſaith in another place, *Feliciſſimi cujuſque delicatiſſimus eſt ſenſus, et, niſi ad nutum cuncta ſuppetant, omnis adverſitatis inſolens, minimis quibuſque proſternitur. The moſt proſperous, have a delicate ſenſe, and, if all things be not at their beck, being unuſed to all Adverſity, they are caſt down with every triffle.*

3. And I am the more inclined to this Recommendation, for the Reverend Author's ſake: God threatneth by Sickneſs, to call him hence; and therefore, that he may Preach to *many*, when he is removed from a *few*, and ſilenced in the duſt; is that honour to his Name, and that benefit to Men, which I gladly would Promote. He is an Orthodox, Sober, Peaceable, Divine; that never intereſſed himſelf, with

any thing like a Faction: An excellent and moſt Methodical Preacher, whoſe labour is better in the Pulpit, then in the Preſs: I have oft heard him, and ſcarce ever heard a Sermon from him, which I thought not worthy to be publiſhed: No, not when he began to Preach, (about 26. years ago). Many ſuch Humble, Godly, able faithful Labourers, I had the happineſſe to be a Neighbour to, in the County where he liveth. In the *matter* and *ſtyle* of this Book, you may trulier know, than from the Reports of Malice, what Sedition, what Faction, what Schiſm or Hereſy they Preached: for it was ſuch as this, ſo far as I was acquainted. O happy *England!* That hath more Able, Powerful, Laborious Preachers to ſpare and lay aſide, than any other Nation that I hear of in the world, proportionably doth enjoy. Now, *he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear. Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, leſt darkneſs come upon you: for he that walketh in darkneſs, knoweth not whither he goeth*, John 13. 35.

Your Companion, in the hope
March 14. and patience of Believers,
1661.

Rich. Baxter.

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viz. { *The things themſelves.* / *The Evil of the things.*

2. *For the taking them off; ſhewed in* 4. *Particulars.*

CHAP. V.

2. Queſtion, *Whether it be lawful to pray for the things of this life? Since we know not but they may be for evil to us.*

Anſwered { 1. *Generally.* 2. *Particularly.*

1. *In General, ſhewed it is lawful in* 6. *things.*
2. *Particularly, Not to pray for them* { *Abſolutely.* *Ultimately.*

God's Glory chiefly to be eyed, in praying for outward things.

How a man may know, he eyes the Glory of God in praying for outward things; ſhewed in 4. *Particulars.*

3. Queſtion, *Whether man's Ignorance, of what is good or evil for him in this life, doth warrant him to adventure upon buſineſſes, hand over head,*

Without { *Conſideration.* *Circumſpection.*

Anſwered in 6. *Particulars.*

CHAP. VI.

Application.

1. *Information. Of three ſorts of Perſons, miſtaken about Conditions.*
   1. *Some about a Proſperous Condition, Thinking it good for them.*
      Four Grounds of their miſtake.
      Their Grounds Examined.

The fallaciouſneſs of them diſcover'd in divers particulars

CHAP. VII.

2, *Some miſtaken about an Afflicted Condition.*

Five

Five ſorts of things about which they are Miſtaken.
The Grounds of theſe miſtakes Examined.
Several Queries put to ſuch, who ſo miſtake.
3. *Some miſtaken, in thinking it is good for them, becauſe they are Afflicted.*

The Ground of that miſtake { *Diſcovered.* / *Examined.*

CHAP. VIII.

2. Information. *That we ſhould be content to receive Evil, as well as Good, at the Hand of God. Seaven Reaſons for it.*
The great Queſtion Reſolved, (viz.) *Whether the knowledg, of what is Good or Evil for a man in this life, be ſo hidden from man, that no man can attain to it. Anſwered; and Directions given:*

The Directions of 2. *ſorts* { 1. *General.* / 2. *Particular.*

1. *General. Something is to be* { *Known.* / *Done.*

1. *What is to be Known.*
1. *Who is the Framer of Conditions.*
2. *What is the right way of judging of Conditions. That ſhewed in* 6. *Particulars.*
3. *What it is makes a Condition good for a man in this life.*
   1. *An Intereſt in the Covenant.*
   2. *The Enjoyment of God in a Condition.*
   3. *Suitableneſs of Spirit to a Condition.*
   4. *Peace within.*
   5. *Doing the work of our Condition.*
   6. *Living above our Condition.*

A twofold living above it,
1. Sinful.
2. Holy living above it { Comforts. / Croſſes.
7. Watchfulneſs againſt the Temptations of a Condition.

CHAP. IX.

8. Spirituallizing a Condition.
9. An holy Indifferency of Spirit, in reſpect of Conditions.
Five Reaſons for that Indifferency.
10. Right Behaviour in a Condition.
Nothing of God's muſt diſpleaſe us.
Nothing of ours muſt diſpleaſe God.
11. Enjoyment of our ſelves in a Condition.
12. Adorning our Condition.
Thus for what is to be known, by thoſe that will make a Judgment of Conditions.
2 What is to be Done.
1. Inquire by Prayer, What is the Mind and Meaning of God in a Condition.
Two things to be inquired after { 1. God's End / 2. Our Duty } in it.
2. Searching our ſelves, What we are in a Condition.
3. Taking a right view of Conditions.
How to take a right view of conditions.
1. View them by Scripture-Light.
How the Scripture helpeth us, in Viewing of Conditions. Shewed in 6. Particulars.

CHAP. X.

2. In Viewing a Condition, take a right ſtanding: Particular Directions about that.
Queſt. How a man may know, Whether a Proſperous Condition be good for him? Anſ-

Answered,
1. *If Temporal, hinder not Spiritual Prosperity.*
2. *Using the things of that Condition, with right considerations.*
(viz.) *Of their* { *Changeableness.* / *Dangerousness.* / *Usefulness.* / *Inferiority.* / *Emptiness.* / *Our own Mortality.* / *Our Accompt.*
3. *Not forgetting the Afflictions of* Joseph.

CHAP. XI.

Quest. *How a man may know, Whether an Afflicted Condition be Good for him.*
1. *He must make a Judgment of himself.*
Two Questions to be put to our selves in that Condition.
1. *What we do in it.*
2. *What we make of it.*
1. *What a man is to do in that Condition?*
1. *To find out, What an Affliction comes in Order to.*
2. *To set in with the Affliction, and to further it in the work, for which it is sent.*
3. *To eye our Passions and Affections, more than our Afflictions.*
4. *To eye our Sins, more than our Sufferings.*
Five things to move us to it.
5. *To keep our Hearts open Heaven-ward.*
6. *To keep the Ear open to Counsel.*
7. *Framing the Heart, to a Pious Submission to God.*
8. *Laying the Affliction to heart.*
A two-fold laying Affliction to heart.
1. *Carnal, sinful, hurtful.*
2. *Spiritual, holy, helpful.* 9. *Pati-*

9. *Patient Waiting* { *On God.* / *For God.*

10. *Making all out of God, that we need in that Condition.*

CHAP. XII.

2. *What do you make of an Afflicted Condition:*

Affliction is, 1. *God's Furnace, to* { *Melt.* / *Refine.*

2. *God's School.* *In a School, there is a* { *Book.* / *Rod.*

Affliction is God's Rod, to beat ſomewhat { *Into us.* / *Out of us.*

Five Queries, concerning what Inſtructions, Afflictions have Sealed.

3. *Affliction is God's Plough.*
The work of the Plough, ſhewed in 3. *Particulars.*

4. *Afflictions are God's Phyſick.*
What kind of Phyſick, ſhewed in 3. *Particulars.*

CHAP. XIII.

Queſt. *What Counſel and Direction to be given, concerning the Chooſing or Refuſing Conditions.*

Directions { *General.* / *Particular.*

1. *General.*

1. *Be not your own Chooſers.*
Man's unfitneſs to be his own Chooſer of his Condition.

Queſt. *How a man may know he is not his own chooſer.*
Anſwered *in* 8. *Particulars.*

Queſt. *Whether Lawful, to wiſh things had fallen*

out

out otherwiſe than they did.
Anſwered *in ſeveral Particulars.*
2. *Particular Directions.*
1. *Seek not great things, but only what is Convenient.*
The Good of deſiring what only is Convenient.
1. *It freeth us from Temptations.*
2. *It is the moſt Eaſy, in reſpect of a burthen of* {*Cares.* *Duties.*
3. *It is Safeſt for us.*
4. *Moſt Commodious for us as Chriſtians, whoſe life is compared to a* {*Race.* *Warfar.* *Pilgrimage.*

CHAP. XIV.

Queſt. *What is to be Accompted* {*Competent.* *Convenient.*
Anſwered *in* 4. *things.*
2. *Direction, Seek thoſe things that are good, without Controverſy and Diſpute.*
Queſt. *What thoſe things are?*
Anſw. 1. *In General. Godlineſs, which is good and profitable* {*For all Perſons.* *For all Things.* *At all Times.* *For both Worlds.*
2. *In Particular. This is Good without Diſpute.*
1. *To Eye more the Enjoyment of God, than Enjoyments from God.*
2. *To Rejoyce more in the God of our Mercies, then in the Mercies of our God.*

3. *To*

3. *To ſerve God chearfully, however He ſerve us.*
4. *To keep God, what ever we loſe for keeping Him.*
5. *To remember God and his Glory, in all our wayes.*
6. *To Conſecrate all we have, to His ſervice.*
7. *To give the things of another life the Prehemi-nence. Wherein giving them the Prehemi-nence, ſhewed in 5. Particulars.*
8. *What ever a mans condition be in this life, to fetch comfort from the conſideration, of what his condition hereafter ſhall be.*
9. *What ever his Portion be, to make God his Portion.*
Reaſons, Why we ſhould make God our Portion.
10. *To have Sin Pardoned. Set out in 2. Par-ticulars.*
11. *To lay up Treaſure, where things are*
Pureſt.
Sureſt.
12. *To ſeek after Diſtinguiſhing Favours.*
13. *To keep Peace Within, however things are without.*
14. *To keep our ſelves in a continual preparation for Death.*
This is ſhewed in 5. Particulars.

READER,

READER,

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A POSING QUESTION.

Eccleſ. 6. 12.

For, who knoweth what is Good for Man in this Life?

CHAPTER I.

THis Book of *Eccleſiaſtes*, is a book full of Diſcoveries. The great diſcovery *Solomon* makes in it, is this, *Viz.* What it is upon which the deſires of Man ought to fix, as their utmoſt End and Reſt.

Thereupon, *Solomon* makes this great Enquiry, Wherein Man's chiefeſt Good and Happineſſe conſiſts?

In it he proceeds { 1. Negatively, 2. Affirmatively.

1. Negatively; and ſo, ſhews wherein true Happineſſe

pineſſe is not to be found: And there you have *Solomon* diſcovering the falſe and counterfeit Felicities of mans dark heart, and the wofull miſtakes of men about their chiefeſt Good.

This he doth more { Generally, Particularly.

1. More Generally, in this Propoſition, *Cap.* 1. 2. *Vanity of vanities, All is vanity.*

2. More Particularly; In recounting ſeverall things, whereon men fix their Eyes and Hearts, as though happineſſe were to be found in them.

1. Knowledg, both Naturall and Morall.
2. Pleaſure, and all the ſweeteſt earthly Delights.
3. Honour, and greatneſſe of Authority.
4. Riches, and earthly Poſſeſſions.

The three firſt of theſe, *Solomon* diſcourſeth of in the four firſt *Chapters*. And in the fifth *Chapter* he comes to examine, and conſider of that of Riches. And having, in the former *Chapter*, by many Arguments, proved the Vanity of Riches; he comes in this *Chapter* to adde four Arguments more.

1. A man may have the Poſſeſſion of them, and yet want the right Uſe, and comfortable Enjoyment of them. This you have, in the ſix firſt *Verſes*.

2. They are not able to give ſatisfaction to the Deſires of men. This he proves, *Ver.* 7. *All the labour of a man is for his Mouth*, i. e. for the Body, and the ſervices of It; But *the Appetite is not filled.* And further confirmes it, *Ver.* 8. by comparing the Wiſe and Fooliſh, Rich and Poor, together. If there were ſuch contentment, and ſatisfaction to

be

be found in Riches, why then Wise men and Rich men should, of all others, enjoy the happiness of it. But, saith *Solomon*, *What hath the Wise more than the Foolish? What hath the Poor, that knoweth to walk before the Living?* q.d. What hath a painfull and laborious Poor man lesse of Contentment than the Rich?

3. Riches are unable to preserve from, or protect against, those Evils to which Man is subject, *viz.* Sickness, Pain, Grief, Sin, Wrath. *Ver.* 10. *That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is Man.* i. e. Call him what you will; Wise, Honourable, Rich; why yet he is still but Man, Weak, Earthy, Frail, Mortal; and so, subject to those Miseries that attend Man.

4. Abundance of Riches hath abundance of Cares, Troubles, Distractions, Disquietments, *Ver.* 11. *Seeing there are many things that increase Vanity, what is Man the better?* q.d. Many, by encreasing Riches, think to encrease Happiness; yet they do but encrease Vanity: And if so, then Man is so far from being the better, that he is the worse for them.

Thus, *Solomon* shewes how men are mistaken in thinking Happinesse to lye in Riches; And the ground of this mistake is laid down in the words of the Text, and that is; Mans ignorance of what is good for him in this life; He thinks that good, which is evil. *For, who knoweth what is good for man in this life?*

The words are a Questionary Proposal. *Who knoweth what is good for man in this Life?* The Interrogation implies a Negation, and so resolves it self into this universal negative Proposition; No

man knowes what is good for man in this life. One great thing, about which the ignorance of man discovers it self, is this, What is good, and what is evil, for a man in this life.

The Conclusion deducible from the words, is this:

Doct. *No man infallibly knowes what is good, and* (so on the contrary) *what is evill, for a man in this Life.*

In the handling of this Proposition, I shall proceed

By way of { Explication. Confirmation. Application.

1. For Explication. So we are to make two Enquiries.

1. Of what *Good*, this is to be understood.
2. Of what *Men*, this is to be understood: And whether every man is concluded under the Ignorance of what is good for a man in this Life.

1. Consider of what *Good* this Proposition is to be understood. So the Question is, Whether no man knoweth what is good for himself in any particular.

For the better understanding of this, consider, What it is that we call *good?* That is *Good* that all desire. *Goodness* is, *Congruentia rei cum appetitu*, It is the suitableness and agreement of the thing to and with the desire; And hence it is, that *bonum & appetibile*; what is good, and what is desirable, are the same.

Now here is the Question, when every one desires

ſires what is good, that, for all that, no man knows What is good for a man; ſince every man knows what it is that ſuites with his deſires.

For the Anſwering of this Queſtion, we muſt give-in ſome Diſtinctions.

1. Diſtinction is this;

There is *Bonum* { *Reale* / *Apparens*

There is *Good real*, and, *Good in appearance*. There is that that is truly good, and that that ſeemeth good but is truly evil; There is that that is good, and that that only ſeems good.

Now when we tell you, No man knoweth what is good for a man in this life; It is to be underſtood of the former, not of the latter. No man knows what is really good for him; He knows indeed what is ſeemingly good for him, what pleaſeth his carnal appetite and corrupt deſires; but what is really good for him, Man knoweth not.

2. Diſtinction;

There is *Bonum* { *Jucundum*, good pleaſing. / *Utile*, good profitable.

1. There is *a Pleaſing good*, that pleaſeth our Natures, and delights our Senſes.

2. There is a *Profitable good*; And we muſt know this, that things may be pleaſingly good, that are not profitably good. Things may be toothſome, that are not wholeſome. A man in the Fit of an Ague, knows, Drinking much would be a pleaſing good to him, when the Phyſitian knows, it would

not be a profitable good and ſo denyeth it.

Now the propoſition is to be underſtood of the latter, not of the former. Every man knoweth what is a pleaſing good. He knoweth, (as it is ſaid of *Iſſachar*) Reſt is good, and Health is good; but he knows not what is a profitable good for man.

3. Diſtinction;

There is Good that is ſo { *Simpliciter* / *Secundum Quid.*

1. There is that which is, in it ſelf, and of it ſelf, good; So Riches, and Health, and Honour, are in themſelves good, being Bleſſings of God, and Streams that Iſſue from that Fountain of Goodneſs that is in him. And ſo, on the contrary, that are in themſelves Evill; as Poverty, Sickneſs, Croſſes, Afflictions, being brought in by Sin.

2. There is that that is good in ſome reſpects, *et quoad nos*, in reſpect of us. There is *Bonum commodum*, a convenient good. That may be good in it ſelf, that is not good for us; I mean, a convenient good.

So the Propoſition is to be underſtood of the latter, not of the former. A man may know what is good in it ſelf, when he may not know what is good for him. A man may know, Riches are good, when yet they may not be a convenient good for him. *Agur*'s Prayer, *Prov.* 30.8. was, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, feed me with food Convenient.* Though he ſaw, Riches were in themſelves good, yet he queſtion'd whether they were a Convenient good for him; and thereupon deſires a middle Eſtate, between Poverty and Riches. So that, when we

tell

tell you, No man knowes what is good for man in this life, it is to be understood of a Convenient good.

4. Distinction.

There is good in Respect

1. Of our Apprehensions and Imaginations.
2. Of Gods Intention.

1. There is good in respect of our apprehensions. So men, have their several apprehensions of what is good, and what is evil. One man apprehends Honour good for him, and Riches good for him; And apprehends Disgrace evil, and Poverty evil. A man apprehends Health good, and Sickness evil, for him.

2. There is good in Gods Intention. And so the Proposition is to be understood of the latter, not of the former. Though a man may know what is good for himself in his own apprehension, yet he knows not what is good for him in *Gods Intention*. What a man apprehends to be good to him, may be intended for evil; and what he apprehends as evil, may be intended to him for good, Eccles. 9. 1. *No man knowes Love or Hatred by any thing that is before him*. The meaning is, That no man from outward blessings, which are good in our apprehension, can conclude that God loves him, and intends good to him; And no man from outward Afflictions, which are evil in a mans apprehension, can conclude hatred, or that He intends evil to him. So that though a man knoweth what is good and evil for him in his own Apprehension, yet he knoweth not what is good or evil in God's Intention.

5. Distinction:

There is *Good*, that is good in a General Notion and Consideration; And *Good*, that is good in relation to particular Cases, and to particular Times.

So the Propoſition is to be underſtood of the latter, not of the former. This is granted, that a man may know what is good and what is evil for him in General; but a man knoweth not what is good for him in ſuch a particular Caſe, and at ſuch a particular Time. As *Huſhai* ſaid of *Achitophel*'s Counſell, *It is not good at this time*; Why ſo what a man looks upon as good for him, may not be good for him at ſuch a time. Riches that ſeem to be Good for a man, yet at ſome times may be Evil to a man: As in Plundring times, it was a mans unhappineſſe either to be, or to be thought, Rich.

Thus for the firſt thing, *Of what Good this is to be underſtood.*

2. The ſecond thing to be Enquired after, is, *Of what Men, this is to be underſtood?* So the Queſtion is, Whether the Propoſition concludes all men, without Exception, under this ignorance; and excludes all from the knowledge of *what is good for them in this Life?*

So the Queſtion is concerning Godly men that are ſanctified, and enlightned by the Spirit of God, Whether are they as Ignorant in this particular, as others?

Anſw. There is a great difference to be put between the Spiritual and the Natural man, in reſpect of their knowledge of *what is good or evil for a man in this Life.* A Godly man, not only knows what is good for a man, in relation to the Life to come; as Pardon of Sin, an Intereſt in Chriſt, &c. but alſo he knows more than others do *what is good for a man in this Life.* He knows, that many things are *good* for a man, that are apprehended to be *evil*;

and

and he knows, there are many things *evil* for a man that are look'd on as *good*. Thus *David* ſaid, *It was good for him that he had been afflicted*; when others looked upon Afflictions as *evil*, he looked on them as *good* for him. *Agur* prayed againſt *Riches*; why, he knew they were *evil* for him, when others look upon abundance as *good*.

So, conſider; a *Godly* man hath Four things to help him in the knowledg of this, that others have not.

1. He hath the Spirit of God to inſtruct and teach him *what is good and evil for a man in this life*. When others are only led by Senſe, & Opinion, the Godly man is taught, and led by the Spirit of God.

2. He hath the Sanctuary to go into, where he may learn what is *Good and Evil for a man in this Life*. There *David* tells you, that he attain'd to this knowledg; and, till he went into the Sanctuary he was ignorant of it, *Pſal.* 73. 17.---*till I went into the Sanctuary*. Till then, he thought it was *ill* for good men, that they were *afflicted*; and that it was *good* for wicked men, that they were in *proſperity*: But when he came into the Sanctuary, he was informed otherwiſe.

3. The Godly man hath *convincing* Experience, by which he comes to know *what is good and evil for a man in this life*. So that by experience, he knows that to be *good* for him, that others think *evil*, Pſal. 119. 71. *It is good for me that I have been Afflicted. David* ſpeaks it from *experience*.

4. The Godly man hath the Promiſe to help him too, *Rom.* 8. 28. *All things work together for good to them that Love God*. So that, being ſuch as Love God, they know all ſhall be for Good to them, be it what it will. Though it ſeem Evil, yet it ſhall work for Good.

Theſe

These things Godly men have above others, whereby they are enabled above others to know what is Good for them this in Life. And yet, for all this, the Proposition includes them too, as well as others. It is true, *Solomon* (it is probable) means it chiefly of the Natural and Unregenerate man; yet it takes in the Godly man too, as one that knows not what is Good for a man in this Life. And that especially in two Cases:

1. A Godly man knows not what is good for a man, in all things.
2. He knows not what is good for a man, at all times.

1. A Godly man knows not what is good for a man in *all things*. *In this* (as the Apostle speaks) *they know but in part*. And it appears thus; that they have been denyed in their Requests, Praying for that that God saw not Good for them. Thus *Abraham* for *Ishmael*. Thus *Moses* requested to have gone into the Land of *Canaan*. And Gods denying them these Requests, must be interpreted Gods not seeing that particular thing Good for them; and that indeed it was not good for them: The Will of God being the highest Rule of *Goodness*.

So we find some of the Servants of God have been blinded with *passion* in some of their *requests*; as *Elijah* and *Jonah*; and God did not see it *good* to grant them what they desired. *They Asked they knew not what.*

2. A Godly man may not know what is good for him, at *all times*. Of that they have been ignorant till they have gone *into the Sanctuary*, and till experience hath afterward taught it them. Time was, when *David*, a Godly man, was mistaken about

about the Afflictions of Godly men, and the Prosperity of Wicked men; till he went *into the Sanctuary*. Till then, he was as Ignorant as other men. So that till then, a Godly man may be Ignorant of, *What is good for man in this life.*

CHAP. II.

NOw for the Confirmation of the Proposition.

I shall confirm it by { 1. Scripture. 2. Reason

1. By Scripture. So we may gather, from Scripture, two things, that may serve to assert the truth of this Proposition.

1. Scripture acquaints us with what Disappointments men have met with in those wayes, wherein they have dreamt of nothing but *good*, and *benefit*, and *advantage* to themselves. How many have Ruin'd themselves, by that by which they thought to have Rais'd themselves. Scripture gives us many Instances in this kind, of those whose Table hath been their Snare; and what they thought should have been for their Welfare, hath become their Trap, *Psal.* 69. 22. And this shews how men have been mistaken in *what is good for them*. The Scripture furnisheth us with many Instances; as those of *Ahab*, in compassing *Naboths* Vineyard. *Gehezi*, in getting the Talents of Silver from *Naaman*. *Achan*, in stealing the Wedge of Gold, and the *Babylo-*

Babyloniſh Garment. *Haman*, in ſcrewing himſelf into the Favour and Affection of his Prince. *Iſrael*, in asking a King; and in asking Quails. Scripture ſhews us how theſe were miſtaken about what was *good* for them. We may ſay of them, this, That, had they known what had been *good* for them, they would not have done what they did. *Solomon*, in *Eccleſ.* 5. 13. ſpeaks of an Evil that he had *ſeen under the Sun*, viz. *Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt*. Surely, if the *owners* had not thought they had been for their *good*, they would not have laid them up.

2. Scripture acquaints us with this; That there have been many, that, contrary to expectation, have found thoſe things *good* for them that they thought *evil*, and looked on them as *Evils*. As it tells us of many, that found that to be *evil* to them, that they thought to be *good* for them; ſo of many, that have found that to be *good* for them, that they thought to have been *evil*. Scripture furniſheth us with Inſtances in this particular. And here time would fail me to tell you

1. Of *Job*, who looked upon himſelf, as the moſt Miſerable man in the World; That God had ſet him *as a Mark to ſhoot at*; as if God would make *ſport* with him. He tells you how God wrote *bitter* things againſt him; Yet we ſee, all was for his *good*. And ſo we ſee *Jam.* 5. 15. what end God made with him: ſo that we ſee by that, that *Job* was miſtaken about his Afflictions.

2. *David*, *Pſal.* 119. 71. confeſſeth, *It is good for me that I have been Afflicted*. Conſider, time was, when *David* did not think ſo.

Time

Time was when *David* complained of them. But ſee, he was afterwards of another mind, and tells us, It was *good* for him that he was *afflicted*. In Pſal. 73. (if he were the Penman of it) you find there was a time when he was envious at the proſperity of the Wicked, and thought them the happieſt men; and he was troubled at the adverſity of the Godly, and thought them the moſt miſerable men; but afterwards he confeſſeth his ignorance and miſtake in that particular.

To cloſe up this: If you look upon *Heb.* 12. you ſhall find the Apoſtle ſpeaking to Chriſtians under Affliction; and endeavours to convince them of their miſtake about Afflictions, and that they looked upon that as evil which was for their good. You ſhall find, this is the ſcope of the Apoſtle in the beginning of that Chapter. And then, *verſ.* 7. 8. 9. He tells them they are Chaſtiſements, and that they bring forth the quiet fruit of Righteouſneſs: q. d. When you come to taſte the fruit of theſe *Afflictions*, you will be of another *minde*: You will find, contrary to your expectation, that *good* for you that you thought *evil*. You muſt judge of the Tree by the Fruit; and when you come to taſte the *Fruit* of *Afflictions*, you will ſay, You were miſtaken in the *Tree*.

Thus for the Confirmation by Scripture.

2. We come to ſhew the Grounds and Reaſons of the Propoſition, Why no man infallibly knows what is good for *man* in this life.

So

So there is { 1. Some Reaſon of it, in Reſpect of God.
2. Some reaſons of it, in reſpect of Man.

1. The Reaſon of it in Reſpect of God is this: Becauſe God hath hid this knowledge from *man*, and therefore, no *man* knoweth what is *good* for *man* in this *life*.

And if any ask, For what reaſon God hath hid this knowledg from man? I Anſwer.

1. God hath done it to maintain his own Prerogative. It onely belongs to him who made the creature to know what is *good* for the creature. It belongs only to him who hath given life to man, to know what is *good* for a man in this life. He knows man beſt, and knows beſt what is good for man, whether *Riches* or *Poverty*; *Quietneſs* or *Trouble*; *Health* or *Sickneſs*; *Life* or *Death*. This knowledg is too high and excellent for man. It is not for man to know this, which God hath put in his own Power.

2. God doth it to keep man in a ſtate of Dependance on him, and Submiſſion to him; That man may know at whoſe finding he is, and at whoſe diſpoſing, (*viz.*) of that God, who onely knows what is *good* for man. God doth it, to take the creature off from being his own Carver. He will have man look to Him, and ſeek to Him, for what is good for him. God hath hid this knowledge from man, that man may *pray* both for the *good* things, and againſt the *evills*, of this life, with ſubmiſſion to the will of God. *Lord, I know not what is good, or what is evill for me in this life; and therefore I leave my ſelf to thee; and in thoſe things ſubmit my ſelf to thee: Thou ſhalt Diſpoſe of me, Thou ſhalt Carve for me,*

Thou

Thou ſhalt Guide me by thy Counſel, who onely knoweſt what is good or evill for me in this life; Thou ſhalt chuſe my condition for me.

3. God hides this knowledge from man, to magnify and make the Glory of his Wiſdom and Power known, in working contrary to the apprehenſions, hopes, and expectations of man.

So the Wiſdom and Power of God ſhewes it ſelf.

1. In a way of Juſtice, turning *good* into *evill.*
2. In a way of Mercy, turning *evill* into *good.*

1. He ſhewes his Wiſdom and Power in a way of Juſtice, cauſing what was apprehended by men as good for them, to become *evil* to them, contrary to their hopes and expectations. Thus the Lord cauſeth ſome mens Tables to become their Snare; and what they thought to have bin for their welfare, to be their Trap. Thus the Lord lets ſome men lay up Riches for their hurt, and ſuffers them to get Honour to their ſhame. There is an expreſſion in Mal. 2. 2. *I will curſe your Bleſſings.* God can make ſeeming bleſſings to become Curſes. And in this his Wiſdom and Power are Glorioufly ſeen. God can let a man think he hath a good thing in his hand, and turn it into an evill. And hence it is, ſome have curſed their Riches, and Honour, and worldly Greatneſs, as *Charles* the fift, and *Philip* the Second of *Spain* did.

2. He ſhewes his Wiſdom and Power in a way of Mercy, in turning ſeeming *evills* into *good.* That when a man thinks it to be an *evill*, God turns it to *good*, contrary to a mans apprehenſion, hope, and

and expectation. Thus, as he can turn the Rod into a Serpent, ſo he can turn the Serpent into a Rod: He can bring *good* out of *evill*, and *light* out of *darkneſſe*. As he can turn a ſeeming *bleſſing* into a *curſe*, ſo he can turn a ſeeming *curſe* into a *bleſſing*. When *Balack* would have curſed *Iſrael*, *Moſes* tells them, *Deut.* 23. 5. *God turned it into a Bleſſing*. *Joſephs* brethren intended *evil* againſt him, but God turned it into *good*, Gen. 50. 20. And upon this account it is, that God hides the knowledg of what is *good* for a man in this life from man, that he may have a freedom and liberty of declaring his Wiſdom and Power when he pleaſe, both in turning *evill* into *good*, and *good* into *evill*, contrary to mans apprehenſions, hopes, and expectations.

4. God hath hid this knowledg from man, to keep man humble in the midſt of his greateſt outward enjoyments. That the great man may not glory in his greatneſs, and that the rich man may not glory in his riches; ſince he knows not whether they are good for him. When a man conſiders this with himſelf, I have Honour, but I know not whether it be for my *good*; I have Riches, but I know not whether it be for my *good*: how humble ſhould the conſideration of this make a man in the midſt of theſe enjoyments? When he conſiders, Honour hath been many a mans Snare; Riches, and outward proſperity have been many a mans Trap, and I know not but they may be ſo to me: how humble ſhould this keep a man, when he knoweth not whether they are for his *good*? God doth it to keep man from boaſting of his enjoyments, *Prov.* 27. 1. *Boaſt not thy ſelf of to Morrow* (ſaith *Solomon*;) *for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth*. So men

muſt

muſt not boaſt of their Wealth or Honour, ſince they know not what they may bring forth. Thus a man ſhould reaſon with himſelf; Why ſhould I be proud of thoſe things which have proved evill to ſome, and I know not but they may be ſo to me?

5. God hath hid this knowledge from man, To make man patient in *affliction*, and to make him hope in the worſt condition: when a man conſiders thus with himſelf, Alas I know not what is *good* for me in this life: For ought I know, theſe afflictions are good for me; and what reaſon have I then to be impatient under them? why ſhould I fret and murmur at theſe diſpenſations? Do I know what theſe Croſſes and Afflictions may bring forth? Do I know, but that *good* may lie in the womb of them? The Tree may ſeem bitter, yet the Fruit may be Sweet. The Roſe is Sweet, yet the Tree that bears it, is Thorny. I know not, what Grapes may grow upon theſe Thorns, and what Figs upon theſe Thiſtles. When *Shimei* curſed *David*, what ſaid *David*? 2Sam. 16. 12. *It may be the Lord will do me good for this.* God not onely knows how to do his people *good*, but how to do them *good* by ſeeming *evil's*. *It is good for me* (ſaith *David*) *that I have been Afflicted.* Pſal. 119.

6. God hath hid this knowledge from man, To keep men from judging and cenſuring one another. To keep the Rich from deſpiſing the poor, and to keep the poor from envying the Rich. If a man knew, that Riches were good for a man in this life, and that Poverty were evill for a man; then would Rich men look upon themſelves as the onely bleſſed men, and judge of the poor as the only miſerable men. So that, as the Apoſtle ſaith of eating,

Rom. 14. 3. *Let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; and let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not*; So will the Lord have it to be among men, in this case: He will not have the Rich and Great Ones of the world to despise the poor; neither will he have the poor, and such as are in a low condition, to envy the Rich. And, to prevent this, the Lord hath hid this knowledg from man, of what is *good* or *evill* for him in this life. Thou, ô Rich man, knowest not but that thy riches may be for thy hurt, Why shouldst thou then despise the poor? And what knowest thou, O poor man, but thy poverty may be for thy *good*; and why then shouldst thou envy the Rich? This is the disease to which Rich and Poor are subject; The Rich are apt to despise the poor, *Jam.* 2. 6. And the poor are apt to envy the Rich, *Psal.* 37. 1. And the Lord, for the curing of this disease in both, hath hid this knowledge from man.

7. God hath hid this knowledg from man, To let man see that the things of this life are not the things (*viz.*) the only things and the main things, that a man should look after. He doth it to let man know, that outward evils are not evils to be feared, for they may be for *good*: And that outward *good things*, are not the onely *good things* to be sought after; for they may be for a mans hurt. And so the reason why God hides this knowledg from man of knowing what is *good* or *evill* for man in this life, is, That he may especially seek after those things that are *good*, and fly from those evils that have relation to another life. Those things that we call *good*, viz. things of this life, are but things *changeably good*; they are things may become evil to a man,

and

and therefore not the only good things to be *ſought after*; And thoſe things, that we call evil, are but *changeably evil*, ſuch *evils* as may be for *good*; and therefore not the only *evils* to be *fled from*. There are *good things* that are *unchangeably good*, which are *good* for a man in relation to another life, and theſe are the things mainly to be ſought after. And there are *evils* that are *unchangeably evil*, which are *evil* for a man in relation to another life; and thoſe are the *evils* that are moſt to be feared and fled from.

8. God hath hid this knowledg from man, To keep man in a preparation for all conditions: That ſince he knows not what is *good* for man in this life, he may be prepared for what God ſeeth *good* for him; that he may be fitted for all the diſpenſations and purpoſes of God concerning him. *Solomon* ſayeth *Prov.* 27. 1. *Thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth.* And why hath God hidden that knowledg from man, but that a man may be prepared for what ever a day ſhall bring forth, whether *good* or *evil*, *mercies* or *miſeries*, *life* or *death*. *Solomon* in *Eccleſ.* 7. 14. ſpeaking of proſperity and adverſity, ſaith, *God hath ſet them, the one over againſt the other, that Man may find out nothing after him.* There is Chequer-work in the Diſpenſations of God toward man in this life. There is Black and White; There are Fair and Foul, Sunſhine and Rainy days Intermingled; There is Proſperity and Adverſity, changes of Conditions. And mark, God hath ſet the one over againſt the other, there is Adverſity, oppoſite to Proſperity; there is a Vally, over againſt a Hill. And ſee for what end? *That Man may find out nothing after him.* What is the meaning of that? why this, That man ſhould not know

what ſhall come afterwards, or what ſhall come next, whether Proſperity or Adverſity, that ſo he may be prepared for both. When God hath ſet a man upon a Mountain of Proſperity, he cannot aſſure himſelf he ſhall alwayes ſtand there; for there is the Valley of Adverſity ſet over againſt that Mountain, and he knoweth not how ſoon he may be in it. And ſo, ſince he knows not what may be next, God will have him keep himſelf in a preparation for all conditions. *Phil.* 4.11. The Apoſtle ſaith, *I have learned to be full, and to be hungry; to abound, and to want.* As if he ſhould ſay, I am prepared for what God ſees *good* for me; if he ſee it *good* for me to be in a low condition, to be hungry and to want, I am prepared for it, I am prepared for all conditions. And this is one reaſon, why God hath hid this Knowledg from man, that man may be prepared for all *Conditions*. There is an expreſſion in *Eccleſ.* 8.7. *Man knoweth not, what ſhall be.* And what is the reaſon that man knows not what ſhall be? why this, That man may be prepared for what ever ſhall be.

9. God hath hid this knowledg from man, To ſhew man the vanity of his thoughts, and to let man ſee how his thoughts differ from the thoughts of God. As the Lord ſaith in another caſe, *Eſa.* 55.8. *My Thoughts are not as your thoughts.* So the Lord will have men know, that his thoughts and mans thoughts, are not the ſame in reſpect of what is *good* or *evill* for a man in this life. God doth it to ſhew man his thoughts and the vanity of them. Man thinks that *Riches* and *Honour* are good for him in this life, and God lets him ſee how he is miſtaken in his thoughts, by their becoming *evil* to him; And man thinks *Afflictions* are *evil* for him in this life, and

and God lets man ſee how he is miſtaken in his thoughts, by turning them to *good*. Thus God ſhews man the miſtake and vanity of his thoughts, in reſpect of what is *good* or *evil* for man in this life. And ſo the Lord diſcovers to man the vanity of his thoughts in this particular, in three things.

1. In thinking thoſe happy, that enjoy the *good* things of this life; when alas, poor man knoweth not but theſe things are evil for him. Thus the Lord in turning mens Tables into Snares, ſhewes His Thoughts are not as man's. We read of ſome, *Mal.* 3. 15. that *call'd the Proud, Happy*: They thought wicked men were the happieſt men; But God tells them he would have a time to ſhew them the vanity of their thoughts, *v.* laſt. *Then ſhall ye return, and diſcern between the Righteous and the Wicked.* As if he ſhould ſay, You ſhall ſee, My Thoughts were not as your thoughts. Men are ready to think, the Rich man the happy man, and the Great man the happy man. And thus he diſcovers to man the vanity of his thoughts, and to let them know, that they know not the thoughts of the Lord. As the expreſſion is, *Micah* 4. 12. *But they know not the Thoughts of the Lord.*

2. In his thinking them the only miſerable men that are *afflicted*; it is uſual with men to do ſo: And God by hiding from man what is *good* for man in this life, diſcovers to man the vanity of thoſe thoughts. Thus, by making *afflictions good* for a man, they come to ſee they were miſtaken in their thoughts, and find that Gods thoughts were not as their thoughts. God in this, gives man to ſee his folly in giving a judgment of thoſe things he knows not. And to let man ſee, that while he

profeſſeth himſelf wiſe, he becomes a fool, *Rom.* 1.22 That he is miſtaken about the intentions of God, ſince what he apprehended *evil*, was by God intended for *good*. God by this lets men ſee how much their apprehenſions and His intentions differ. How hath the Lord brought men to acknowledg their folly in this particular. Thus he that was the Penman of *Pſal.* 73. tells you at *verſ.* 22. *So fooliſh was I and Ignorant*!

3. In his judging of the intentions of Gods heart, by the diſpenſations and operations of His hand; And for this reaſon God hath hid this knowledge from man, to ſhew man the vanity of his thoughts, and his judgings, in that particular. Though Gods heart and hand go together, yet not alwayes ſo as men imagine. Men think, where there is a loving heart, there ſhould be a bleſſing hand; and where there is an afflicting hand, there ſhould be an hating heart. God carryeth things in a myſtery; But God will give man to know, he underſtands not that myſtery. Man is ready to think, God intendeth *good* to that man to whom he diſpenſeth *good* things, (I mean) things temporally *good*; and that he intendeth evil to that man, to whom he diſpenſeth things temporally *Evil*. Now the Lord by hiding this knowledg from man, will let man ſee how he is miſtaken in theſe thoughts, and will let him know, that, with a loving heart, there may go an afflicting hand; and with an hating heart, an hand that is ſeemingly a bleſſing hand; That there may be *good* in his intention, when there may be ſeeming *evil* in his Diſpenſation. When God Afflicts, and Chaſtiſeth, and Corrects, Who would think there

there were *good* in His Intention? and yet, *Heb.* 12. 10. *He chasteneth us for our profit. Rev.* 3. 19. *As many as I love, I Rebuke and Chasten.* Remember that, *Eccles.* 9. 1. *No man knowes love or hatred by what is before him*; he knoweth not the Intentions of God by his Dispensations; he knoweth not Gods Heart by Gods Hand.

And thus for the Ground in General, Why God hath hid the Knowledg of what is Good or Evil for a man in this life.

CHAP. III.

I Now come to give you the Particular *Reasons*, why no man knoweth what is *good* for a man in this *life*.

So the Ground of it is this.

Reason. Mans inability to know what is *good* for a man in this *life*. So consider; Man is utterly unable to make a judgement of Conditions, and infallibly to say, what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this *life*.

The ignorance of man is great in this particular, and I shall shew you it to be such, that it is not possible for a man, as man, to give a judgement of what is *good* for a man in this *life*. And that in these Particulars.

I. A man knoweth not what the spirits and dispositions of men are, and therefore he cannot know what is a fit and *convenient good* for them in this *life*. We know not, what will fit a mans spirit and disposition, unless we know his spirit and dis-

poſition. He knoweth not the foot, and therefore knoweth not what ſhooe will fit him. *No man* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *knows the things of a man*, and ſo he knowes not the ſpirits and diſpoſitions of men. Nay let me tell you more, Man knoweth not his own ſpirit and diſpoſition, and how a condition will ſuit with it. Chriſt told his Diſciples, *Luk.* 9.55. *They knew not of what ſpirit they were.* And then, man knoweth not, what is a fit and *convenient good* for himſelf. It is with men in this caſe, as with ſome that drink Wine, who find it pleaſant, but know not the ſtrength of it, nor the ſtrength of their own heads to bear it, and ſo come to be diſtemper'd by it before they are aware. Every man thinks proſperity *good* for him, when as all men can no more bear a proſperous condition, then all heads can bear Wine or ſtrong Drink. Man knowes not how a condition will ſuit with his diſpoſition, till they meet. We have a Famous Inſtance in *Hazael*, 2 *King.* 8. 13. when he heard what was propheſied of him, he thought the doing of ſuch things did better ſuit with the nature of a Dog then of a Man; and therefore anſwers, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he ſhould do ſo?* But what is the Prophets reply? *The Lord hath ſhewed me, that thou ſhalt be King over* Syria, q. d. The change of thy condition will preſently diſcover that diſpoſition to be in thee, that now thou wilt not believe is in thee.

All men know not what Lyons and Wolves lie ſleeping in their boſoms, till they are awakened. Like the Snake in the Snow, that doth not ſtir and hiſſe, till it feel the warmth of the fire of proſperity.

Every man is apt to think his head can bear the Wine

Wine of Prosperity till he drink of it. As the Sons of *Zebedee* answered Christ, when he asked them, Can ye Drink of the Cup that I must Drink of, and be Baptised with the Baptism I must be Baptised with, and they answered, *We are able.* So ask a man, whether he be fit and able to bear a prosperous condition? whether he be fit for Honour and Riches? why, he is ready to answer, that he is able; when alas, he knoweth not his own spirit and disposition. And therefore, through a suspition of this, *Agur* prayed, *Prov.* 30. 8. *That God would give him neither Poverty nor Riches*; And why he prayed against riches, he gives the reason, *lest I be full and forget Thee.* Why, he did not know under what Temptations Riches might bring him: They might be such strong drink that his head would not bear. And in this he shew'd he was Ignorant of his own spirit and disposition; he was afraid that Riches would not suit with it.

II. Man is ignorant of this, how Men will manage their conditions, and thereupon is unable to give, and make a Judgement of them. Man knoweth not, how a man will use, and improve his condition. Things prove *good* or *evil* to men according to their management of them. There is an Art of managing conditions, which most men are ignorant of; a condition that might be for a mans *good*, through the ill-managing of it, becomes *evil.* It is the saying of one, that, Every thing hath two handles. And so it is in respect of Conditions, they have two handles. And here is the thing, to take Prosperity and Adversity, to take every condition by the right handle. Now in this the Ignorance of man is seen, In his taking of things by the wrong handle; and so

ſo taking of conditions by wrong handles, they become evil; whereas if they would take them by the right handle, that condition might be for *good* to them that otherwiſe is not. So man knoweth not by what handle men will tak hold of Conditions.

Solomon hath an expreſſion, *Eccleſ.* 8. 6. *To every purpoſe there is time and judgment; therefore the miſery of man is great on him.* The meaning is this, That, God having put handles to things, and men not laying hold on the right handle, his not knowing how to do things, and when to do things, makes the miſeries of man great upon him. So it is in reſpect of conditions; ſeeming mercies become miſeries, becauſe men know not how to uſe them; and ſeeming miſeries would become mercies, if men did but know how to uſe them.

It is in this caſe with us as with children, who, if you give them a knife, know not to make any other uſe of it then to cut and wound themſelves; and ſo, moſt men know not how to make any other uſe of their conditions, then to hurt themſelves.

And hence it is that no man knowes what is *good* for man in this life, what condition is *good* for him, whether a proſperous or an adverſe condition, becauſe he knowes not how he will manage his condition.

The wrong Uſe man makes of Conditions, makes it impoſſible to man to give a judgment of conditions. And through this ignorance it comes to paſſe, that things prove to be *evil* for a man, that might have been for *good.* Upon this account many a mans Table becomes his Snare, and what might have been for his Welfare becomes his Trap. Thus by his abuſing things, he makes *Bleſſings* become

become *Curſes*; and ſo thoſe things become *Evil* that might have been for *Good*.

Thus it is in reſpect of { Proſperity. / Adverſity.

1. For Proſperity; How do many abuſe it to the feeding of their luſts, whereby that becomes *evil* to them that might have been for *good*? and ſo by their ill managing of a condition, make that condition to become *evil* to them that might have bin for *good*. Why thus they draw *evil* out of *good*; as when a Spider draws Poyſon out of a Flower, it is not from the Flower but the Nature of the Spider; that, turns it into Poyſon.

2. For Adverſity; Why there are many that do want the Art of making *good* out of *evil*; and ſo that becomes *evill* to them, that through their wiſe managing of it might have been for *good*. Men have learned the Art of making Wind and Water ſerviceable to them. We have a Saying of making a vertue of Neceſſity, and ſo there is an Art to make *good* out of *evil*: but man knowes it not.

That man will never be a good Bowler that knoweth not how to ſet the Byaſſe of his Bowle. Conditions have their Byaſſes: and here is the Art and Skill, to ſet the Byaſſe of a Condition right.

III. Man knoweth not to what Dangers, Evils, and Temptations, mens conditions may Expoſe them; and therefore they are not able to give a judgment of conditions, and to ſay what is *good* for a man in this life. We may look upon thoſe things as *good* for a man which may expoſe him to ſuch temptations and dangers that may be for his hurt and ruine. Remember, there are no outward or worldly *good* things, but do expoſe men to

many

many Evils, Dangers, and Temptations, and ſo become *evil* to a man in this *life*. Thus we find, Honour, Riches, outward Proſperity, do expoſe a man to Envy. As one ſaith of *Naboth*, It had been better for him he had not had a Vineyard, it coſt him his life. Theſe things have coſt a man his ſweeteſt things, (*viz.*) his Liberty and Life. How many men had lived longer, had they not had ſuch and ſuch things, wherein they ſeemed to excel and to be more happy then other men. And ſo the Hiſtorian ſaith of the *Romane* Emperours, That they got nothing by their Honour, *niſi ut citius interficerentur*, but to be kill'd the ſooner. We read of *Eſius Proculus*, that he was Slain by *Caligula*, for being the handſomeſt Man in *Rome*. Beauty and Handſomneſs was for his hurt. And *Seneca* was condemned for being too Eloquent, though, at the Interceſſion of one of the Emperour's Lemans his life was ſpared. And hence it is, a man is not able to give a judgment of things, becauſe he knows not what their iſſue may be, and what dangers they may bring a man under; becauſe experience ſhews, that it had been *good* for ſome men to have bin without thoſe things, that, in the eyes of ſome, ſeemed to be *good* for them. That, as our Saviour ſaid of *Judas*, *It had bin good for that man, if he had not bin born*; So we may ſay of ſome, it had been *good* for them, if they never had had Honour, Riches, Beauty, and other things that moſt men look upon, as *good* for a man in this *life*.

IV. Man knoweth not what Snares Satan hath laid in a *Condition*, to catch and entrap a man in; and therefore is not able to give or make a judgment of outward conditions. Through his devices, that con-

condition may become *evil* that ſeemed to be for *good.*

Satan is a ſubtil Adverſary, and he ſeeks to get an advantage againſt us by the conditions we are in. He endeavours to make every condition, a Snare and a Trap to us. He ſtrives to make Temptations out of our Conditions. He knows how to make uſe of our Conditions to advantage himſelf, and to hurt us. And man knows not what Snares Satan may lay for a man in a condition, and what advantage he may make of it to hurt a man, and therefore no certain Judgment can be made of it. Satan is a careful and diligent Obſerver, as of our Conſtitutions, ſo of our Conditions, and will be ſure to ſuit his Temptations to them. He hath his Temptations for all Conditions, whether High or Low, whether Proſperous or Adverſe.

1. If a man be in a Proſperous Condition, why there are Evils he Tempts a man to, in that Eſtate.

And thoſe, both { Moral. / Spiritual.

I. *Moral.* So conſider theſe :

1. Pride and High-mindedneſs. Proſperity inclines a man to it, and here Satan ſayles with Wind and Tide, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Charge them that be Rich in this world that they be not High-minded.*

2. Boaſting and Glorying in their Proſperity, with a Contemning of thoſe whoſe Condition is meaner, *Jerem.* 9. 23. *Let not the Rich man Glory in his Riches.*

3. Injuſtice

3. Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, *Prov.* 22. 7. *The Rich Man Ruleth over the Poor.* Or, as it may be read, *Domineereth.*
4. Luxury, and Profuſeneſs, and Wantonneſs. As the *Sodomites.* And *Dives* that fared Deliciouſly every day.

II. *Spiritual Evils* there are, to which a Proſperous Condition Inclines a man, and to which Satan will be ready to Tempt a man: and theſe are Three:

1. Forgetting God and forgetting Duty. And upon this Account it was, *Agur* prayed againſt Riches, *Prov.*30.9. *Leſt I be full, and forget Thee.*
2. Creature-Confidence. We find the Scripture frequent in giving Cautions concerning that, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *That men ſhould not truſt in uncertain Riches.*
3. Security, We read of the Rich man in the Goſpel, *Luke* 12. 19. *who bid his Soul take its eaſe, it had goods laid up for many years.*

Why thus you ſee a Proſperous Condition hath its Temptations; and all theſe ways, Satan is ready to get an advantage of a man that is in that condition?

Now who can give a Judgement of a mans Condition when it is Proſperous, when he knoweth not but it may caſt him into ſome of theſe Evills.

2. If

2. If a man be in an Adverſe Condition, why that hath its Temptations too. When a mans Condition is low, then Satan Tempts him to Murmuring, Diſcontent, Impatiency, Envy, uſe of Unlawful means. And, upon this Account, *Agur* prayed againſt Poverty, *Prov.* 30. *Leſt I be Poor and Steal.* He ſaw, that condition had its Temptations.

Why thus you ſee, every Condition hath its Temptations: and, How ſhall man be able to make a Judgment of Conditions, when he knows not what Temptations he may fall under, by reaſon of his Condition; when we know not, but Satan, through his Wiles and Devices, may make a condition *evil* for a man, that elſe might have been for his *good*; how he may make that Condition his Snare, that might have been for his Welfare?

V. Man cannot make a Judgment of what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life, becauſe he knoweth not, what the wheel is that is within the Wheel. We read *Ezek.* 1. *Of the wheel in the wheel.* Conſider, there is the outward wheel of Diſpenſation that is viſible to us, and there is a ſecret wheel of Providence within that wheel. So that when we look upon the outward wheel of Proſperity, or Adverſity, we know not what Wheel moves within thoſe wheels. We ſee how the outward wheel moves, but we know not what the motions are of the Wheel within; Its motions may be croſs to the wheel without.

1. Conſider how it is in reſpect of Proſperity. There is an outward wheel that is viſible, and ſeems to move to a mans Honour, Exaltation, and Advancement in the world; and yet we know not what

what croſs motions the ſecret wheel of Providence may have to the External wheel of Diſpenſation: While the outward wheel ſeems to move to a mans Good, and Honour, and Advantage; the inward wheel (for ought we know) may be moving to a mans Hurt and Ruine. According to the ſaying of the Poet,

——— *Tolluntur in altum*
Ut lapſu graviore ruant ———

Their lifting up, may tend to their caſting down. While the outward wheel may ſeem to raiſe them, and mount them; The wheel within, may move to the undoiug and Deſtruction of them. We have a notable Inſtance of this in *Haman:* There was an outward wheel moving to his Raiſing and Advancement, to the ſetting of him High in the favour of his Prince, and who (that had lookt upon that) would not have thought, this had been for *Hamans* good? But ſee, there was a Wheel within the wheel, a Croſs-wheel that was then moving to *Hamans* downfall, and *Hamans* ruine.

II. For Adverſity, why you ſhall find ſometimes the outward Wheel ſeemingly moving to a mans Hurt, and Ruine, and Diſadvantage, when yet we know not the motions of the Wheel, that are within the wheel. There may be within that wheel, a Wheel of Providence moving to a mans *good* and *advantage*. Thus it was in the caſe of *Joſeph*, when he was caſt into a Pit, when he was ſold into *Egypt*, when he was caſt into Priſon by his Maſter; Who would have thought but that this outward wheel of Diſpenſation had moved to *Joſeph*'s ruine; and yet, at the ſame time, there was a Wheel within this wheel moving to the Ad-

Advancement of *Joſeph*, and to the making him Ruler over all the Land of *Egypt*. So in the caſe of *Job*: When he was ſtript of all to a Shoo-latchet, when he was bereaved of his Goods, Cattel, Children, Health, Who would have thought but this wheel of Diſpenſation had moved to the Ruine and utter undoing of *Job*? And yet, at the ſame time, there was a wheel moving within this wheel to his *good* and advantage, as you may read in his Story. So the Apoſtle tells us, *Jam.*5.11. *You have heard of the Patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord.* God's end in all was *Jobs good*, though the outward Wheel of Diſpenſation ſpake it not.

So this is one reaſon, why a man knoweth not what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life; becauſe no man knows the motions of the Wheel of ſecret Provideuce, within the wheel of outward Diſpenſation. We know not what is the end of the Lord in a mans Proſperity or Adverſity; our ſight is not clear and peircing enough to diſcern the wheel within, and what Its motions are: When we ſee a man Great, and Rich, and Honourable, we cannot ſay, He is an happy man, and that it is *good* for him to be ſuch; becauſe we know not the end of the Lord. And ſo, when we ſee a man poor, and low, and in an afflicted condition, we cannot ſay, That man is miſerable, or, that it is evil for him; becauſe in this Diſpenſation we know not the end of the Lord; we know not how the wheel within moves.

Reaſ. 6. Man knoweth not what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life, becauſe of that ſudden and unexpected changeableneſs that there is in all Conditions. Man's ignorance of this, diſables him to make a

judgment of outward Conditions. If a man could make the things of this life certain, why then he might make a judgment of them; but, the comfort in them and the enjoyment of them being uncertain, Who can make a true and perfect judgment of them? The things themſelves are uncertain, and the *good* in them changeable; and, Who is the man then that can ſay, That things, that are ſo full of uncertainty and ſo changeable, are *good* for a man in this life? *Solomon*, in *Eccleſ.* 7. 14. ſpeaking of Conditions, ſaith, *God hath ſet Proſperity and Adverſity one over againſt the other*, as a Vally over againſt a Mountain: So that, when a man lookes upon himſelf as ſet upon the Mountain of Proſperity, he ſeeth a Valley of Adverſity over againſt him: why, he ſeeth a change of his condition before him; and though he ſtand at preſent upon the Mountain of Proſperity, yet he ſees below him a Valley of Adverſity, which he knoweth not how ſoon he may deſcend into. And, who can ſay, Proſperity is *good* for him, when he ſeeth Adverſity over againſt him?

So conſider: upon this account, it is impoſſible that a man ſhould make a perfect judgment of Conditions.

Since { 1. Conditions are Changeable. 2. The Good and Comfort in a Condition is Changeable.

1. The Condition is changeable. An Honourable, Rich, & Proſperous Condition is changeable: and then, what is man the better for being in ſuch a condition? *Pſal.* 49. 20. *Man being in Honour continueth not.* And yet ſee, Men had other thoughts *verſ.* 11. *Their inward thoughts was, that their houſes ſhould*

ſhould continue for ever. They thought, It was *good* for a man to have Houſes and Poſſeſſions, becauſe they looked upon theſe things as conſtant, and enduring, and laſting; They thought their Inheritances lafting, and that they ſhould leave them to thoſe that would continue their memory for ever, that is, to their Children; which are, but the Parents multiplied and continued. Which, as one ſaith, is but *Nodoſa Æternitas*, a knotty Eternity; as when one thread is ſpun and broken, then another thread is knit to it: Thus men dream of a continued Succeſſion. But what ſaith the *Pſalmiſt?* This their way, is their folly; for man being in honour continueth not. Conſider, there is a changeableneſs in all outward conditions; there may be a ſudden turn of Providence. *Job* the Richeſt man in the Eaſt, loſt all (as it were) in an inſtant. All the wit, and care, and induſtry, and providence of man, cannot hinder the Providence of God from making conditions changable. And conſidering this, Who can ſay, This or that condition is *good* or *evil* for a man, when he knoweth not how that condition may change? What if a proſperous condition ſhould change? why then, it had been better a man had not known it; It making a man but more miſerable to have been happy, and then to be miſerable.

2. Though the Condition it ſelf ſhould continue, yet the comforts in the condition is changeable: why, the things of a condition, that ſeems good and comfortable and deſirable, are changeable. The things of ſuch a condition may become a Croſs, and Burden, and Vexation; ſuch a changeableneſs there is in the comforts of a condition that ſeemeth

good for a man. *Augustus* had three Daughters, and all of them very lew'd; and he was used to call them his *Tria Carcinomata* his three Ulcers or Botches; And was used to say, *Utinam aut cælebs vixissem, aut orbus periissem*, I would I had lived unmarried, or died without Children. Life and Light are two of the sweetest things, and yet a man may out-live the comfort of them; they may prove a burden to a man as to *Job* (Job 3.20) *Why is life given to the Afflicted, and light to the bitter in Soul?* Let me tell you; Those things, that are looked on as the greatest earthly comforts, may become a mans Burthens and Afflictions.

Reas. 7. Man cannot make a perfect judgment of what is *good* for him, and so on the contrary what is *evil* for him in this life; because there are but few that have the right Art and way of judging of Conditions; and so are apt to call *good evil*, and *evil good*; and so are disabled from knowing what is *good* for a man in this life. I shall name some of those ways, by which most judge of the *good* or *evil* of a Condition.

1. Opinion.
2. Sense.
3. Affection.

I. Most judge of Conditions by Opinion; they take things to be as they account them. It is Opinion that makes things to be *good* and *evil*, to some, that, if rightly considered, are not so. Thus Conditions are looked upon as *good* or *evil*, according as they are in our Opinion. It was the saying of *Seneca*, *Levis est Dolor, si nil Opinio adjecerit*, The misery would be little, if our Opinion did not adde to it. *Opinion* is a leight judgment of things, by which things

things are *good* in the imagination, but never arrive at the understanding to be made *Reason*. It is an ill *Guide*, and therefore some call it the *Guide of Fools*, when *Reason* is the *Guide of the Wise*. Most men judg of Conditions by Opinion, and so it is impossible they should make a right Judgment of Conditions, of what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this *life*. And therefore, we find the Scripture setting it self to oppose and cross the Opinions of Men, in relation to what is *good* and *evil* for a man in this *life*.

Jam. 5. 1. *Howl ye Rich Men, &c.* Now it is the Opinion of most, that Rich men have cause to Rejoyce.

Prov. 15. 16. *Better is a little with the Fear of the Lord, then great Treasures with Trouble.* This crosseth the general Opinion of men.

Psal. 37. 16. *A little that a Righteous man hath, is better then the Riches of many Wicked.* Now the Opinion of the World is, That much, is alwayes better then little.

One place more, *Eccles.* 7. 2, 3.

Vers. 2. *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, then to go to the house of Feasting.* But most men think not so. *Vers.* 3. *Sorrow is better then laughter.* But this crosseth the general Opinion of men.

II. Another way by which men Judg of the *Good* or *Evil* of Conditions, is by *Sense*. They judg of the *good* & *evil* of things, according as they are pleasing or displeasing to their Senses. They judg of Conditions as many do of Meats, who judg of them by the taste, and so take them to be Wholsome that are Toothsome: And so, on the contrary, those meats Unwholsome that are Unpleasant. And therefore, the Apostle tells those, *Heb.* 12. 11. how they

were miſtaken about their Condition, which was then a Suffering Condition; *No Affliction* (ſaith he) *for the preſent ſeemeth Joyous but Grievous.* Why, Senſe at the preſent can feel no good in it, *But afterwards it bringeth forth the quiet Fruit of Righteouſneſs.* This way of judging deceived *Eve:* She ſaw the Fruit was deſirable, it looked fair to the Eye. Thus many are deceived about their Conditions. They are like the Book St. *John* eatt, As Hony in the Mouth, but in the Belly, as bitter as Gall. Thus men look upon Conditions, whether they are Hony in the Mouth; they look no further, whether they may not prove Gall in the Belly. Why, thus moſt judg of Conditions by Senſe; and while they judg ſo, it is impoſſible for them to know, what is *good* or *evil* for them in this *life.*

III. Some make a judgment of Conditions, by their ſinfully-ſenſual Affections, and ſo account that good for them in this life, that ſuits with their Luſts and Inordinate Deſires. Thus men come to be beguiled with the appearance of *Good,* inſtead of *Real Good.* Moſt men take the word of their Luſts, and corrupt and ſinful Deſires, concerning what is *good* for them. As *Sampſon* ſaid, *Give her me, for ſhe pleaſeth me well.* Since the Fall, man rather conſults with his own Corrupt deſires then any thing elſe, and makes them his Oracle; at which, he enquires about the *good* and *evil* of things: and while they ſeek to that Oracle, it muſt needs follow, that *Good* muſt be rejected under the Notion of *Evil,* and *evil* lookt upon as deſirable under the Notion of *good.* Affections ſenſually-ſinful, are wofully blinded in judging of Conditions.

CHAP. IV.

CHAP. IV.

HAving Explained and Confirmed the Point, I come now to Reſolve ſome Queſtions, that may be put, in Relation to the Truth delivered.

1. *Queſtion*, Whether it be lawful to Pray againſt *Afflictions*, Since no man knoweth what is *good* for a man in this life; and ſo in praying againſt them, we may Pray againſt, and Deprecate that, that (for ought we know) may be for our *Good?*

2. *Queſt.* Whether it be lawful to Pray for outward and worldly good things, as Riches, &c. Since we know not, but we may pray for what is *evil* for us?

3. *Queſt.* Whether our being ignorant of what is *good* for us in this life, doth not warrant us, to undertake things, and adventure on them hand over head, or at hap-hazard (as we ſay) or at adventure, without any Circumſpection, Conſideration, Prudential Foreſight or Providential Care, as in Marriage, &c. Why, ſome may ſay; I know not what is *good* for me in this life, and therefore, Let it happen how it will. So the Queſtion is, Whether this Truth, do not deny and deſtroy all Care of Providence?

I ſhall Anſwer to theſe in order.

1. *Queſt.* Whether, according to the Truth delivered, it be lawful for a man to Pray againſt *Afflictions*, Since he knoweth not but that he may Pray

againſt his own *good*. Since, ſome by Experience have found, It was *good* for them that they were *Afflicted*.

Anſw. Some have bin of this Opinion, that, It is unlawful to Pray againſt *Afflictions*; and that it was not the Errour of *Tertullian*, to ſay, *Afflictions* were to be ſought for, and deſired; and ſaid, That men ought to be ſo far from praying againſt them, that they ought to pray for them and deſire them. But this I look upon, as one of his Errours.

I ſhall give an *Anſwer* to the *Queſtion*.

1. General.
2. Particular.

1. *General.* So I Anſwer; That, notwithſtanding it ſo falls out that *Afflictions* are *good* for a man, yet they may be lawfully prayed againſt. And this Truth I ſhall clear up to you, by four things.

1. *Afflictions* are, in their own Nature, Fruits and Effects of Sin, and ſuch as Nature abhors; ſuch are Sickneſs, Poverty, all ſorts of Loſſes and Croſſes; they were brought in by Sin. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Rom.* 5. 12. *Sin entred into the world, and Death by Sin.* Death is there put for, All Miſeries. As Life in Scripture is put for all Good; ſo Death is the Topick for all Miſeries, being called *the King of Fears*; and ſo the King of Evils, being the King of whatſoever is fearful to man, and what Nature abhoreth. As Death, ſo all Evils (as Death's attendants) came into the world by Sin. Sin was the Mother, and *Afflictions* of all ſorts are the Daughters. So then, looking upon them under this Notion, as the Effects of Sin, they may be prayed againſt. When Sin came into the world, theſe Evils crowded in with It; and when Sin ſhall be no more, theſe Miſeries

and

and Evils ſhall be no more, *Rev.* 21. 4. *There ſhall be no more Death, &c.* The Thred followeth the Needle. Sin was the Needle, that drew in with it the Thred of Miſeries and Afflictions. Man had never known what Loſſes, and Croſſes, and Miſeries, and Afflictions had bin, had it not been for Sin.

2. *Afflictions* of themſelves, do us no *good*; of themſelves, they do not make a man better. The *Good* by *Afflictions* comes from a Superiour Work, from thoſe admirable Influences and Concurrences of the Spirit of God, on, and with, the *Afflictions*. As our Saviour ſaid, *Man lives not by Bread only:* So, man is not amended by *Afflictions* only. Put a Stone into the Fire, it cometh out a Stone ſtill. No water, either hot or cold, will make a *Blackmore* White. Empty Vinegar from Veſſel to Veſſel, it will be Vinegar ſtill. So, let a man be emplyed, from Condition to Condition, he is ſtill the ſame. We know, the Plough breaks up the Earth, but of it ſelf doth not better it; it leaveth it as it was, there is nothing put in by the Plough: If the Huſbandman Dung it, and caſt in good Seed, when he hath broken it up with his Plough, then there is like to be a Harveſt, elſe there is nothing but Weeds and Nettles. The Plough of Afflictions may break our Bodies, and Eſtates, and Spirits; but there will be no Harveſt without ſomething more, without an Heavenly Influence; Afflictions will bring forth only Briars and Thorns. The Expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt, is, *Pſal.* 94. 12. *Bleſſed is the Man whom thou chaſteneſt and teacheſt out of thy Law.* It is then happy, when Correction and Inſtruction go together.

3. As Afflictions are fruits of Sin, and of themſelves

ſelves do no good; ſo oftentimes, through Mans Corruption, they prove occaſions of Sin. They are ſo far from making men Better, that they often make men Worſe. I have ſhewed before, what Evils are incident, both to a ſtate of Proſperity and Adverſity. Satan knoweth, how to make Afflictions to become Temptations: And therefore we find this to be the Reaſon, why *Agur* prayed againſt Poverty, *Prov.*30.9. *leſt I be Poor and Steal, and the Name of God be taken in Vain*; q. d. Poverty may put me under a Temptation of uſing Unlawful means, to the Diſhonour of God. Thus, Afflictions prove ſomtimes occaſions of Sin; and we are taught to Pray, *That we may not be led into Temptation.*

4. Conſider again this, That the Saints and Servants of God have prayed againſt Afflictions: So, they have prayed for

1. The Preventing of them, and Keeping them off.
2. The Removing them, and Taking them off.

1. For the Preventing them, and keeping them Off. Thus did *Agur*, *Prov.*30.8,9. where you have his Prayer; Firſt, Againſt the Evils of Sin, *Ver.* 7. *Take from me Vanity and Lying.* Next, Againſt the Evils of Affliction, *Ver.*8. *Give me not Poverty.*

2. They have prayed for the Removing them, and taking them off. And thoſe have done it, who got as much *good* by their Afflictions, as any under *Heaven*. Thus *David*, Pſal. 39. 10. *Take away thy Stroak from me.* Pſal. 119. 22. *Turn away Shame and Reproach from me.* Thus did *Job*, Job 9.34. *Let him take away his Rod from me.* Job 13. 20,21.

20,21. *Withdraw thine Hand from me, &c.* Where, he Prayeth for Gods taking away his Afflicting Rod, and for his with-drawing his Afflicting Hand. And these Two men, got as much *good* by their being Afflicted, as ever any did.

Thus, in General, You see what we Answer to the Question, Whether Evils of Affliction may be Prayed against?

II. We come to give a more particular Answer to the Question; And tell you, That though we say, It is Lawful to pray against Afflictions; yet it must be with the Observation of some Rules, and Cautions, and Directions. That, as our Saviour said in another case concerning Hearing; *Take heed, how ye Hear*; So in this case of praying against Afflictions, we say, Take heed how ye Pray. So consider; There is a double praying against Afflictions, as I told you before:

1. For the Keeping them off.
2. For the Taking them off.

1. For the Keeping them off. So, there is a Twofold praying for the Keeping off Afflictions.

1. Absolute.
2. Conditional, and with Submission.

1. *Absolute.* When men Pray, that, in no Case, the Evil may happen to them; so making their Will a Law to God's. This praying against *Afflictions*, is Unwarrantable and Unlawful. We must know; for Moral Evils of Sin, we may pray absolutely against, but not so against the Evils of *Affliction*.

2. There is a Praying against them, that is Conditional, & with Submission to the Will of God; This is Lawful. Our Saviour himself prayed that the Cup might

might paſs from Him, but adds this, *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* Our praying againſt *Afflictions* is then right, when there is a ſweet Submiſſion of our wills, to the Will of God: So, that though we know that *Afflictions* are grievous to our Natures; yet, becauſe we know not, what the Decrees and Purpoſes of God are concerning us; and not knowing, but that He may ſee them *good* for us, and make them *good* to us: we do ſweetly ſubmit our wills, to the Will of God, and Proclaim Liberty to Him, to deal with us as He pleaſe. And herein is the Work of Grace ſeen, that, though Nature deſireth wholly to be freed from them, (they being ſuch things as are bitter to It;) yet a Chriſtian leavs himſelf wholly to the Will of God, and ſaith, *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* When Chriſtians ſee the Cup of Affliction preparing for them, or coming towards them, they muſt pray againſt it, only as our Saviour did. It is then right, when in praying againſt Afflictions, we pray abſolutely that God may be Glorified; but for the things that concern our ſelves, we pray with Submiſſion to His Will. Thus Chriſt did, *John* 12. 27, 28. *Save me from this Hour, but for this cauſe came I to this Hour. Father, Glorify thy Self.* Our Saviour is abſolute in that requeſt of his, That His Father would Glorify his Name, and received an Anſwer; But for the other Requeſt, he ſweetly ſubmitted to His Father's Will. Thus doth a Gracious Heart pray abſolutely, that God may be Glorified, (let it be in Relation to himſelf) which way the Lord pleaſe. Thus in deſiring freedom from Affliction, though a Gracious Heart looks upon it as deſirable to Nature, to be freed from Loſſes, and Croſſes, Sickneſs, and Poverty, &c:

Yet

Yet he looks upon Gods Glory as, That, that is to preferred before its own worldly Welfare, Eaſe, Quiet, Contentment, and Comfort. Whereas ſome may ſay, that *Agur* prayed abſolutely againſt Poverty, *Prov.* 30. 8, 9. *Give me not Poverty, &c.* We Anſwer, that though it looketh like an abſolute Requeſt, yet it is not: If we look upon the Reaſon of the Requeſt, *Verſ.* 9. we ſhall find that he prayed abſolutely, only in relation to Gods Glory. For, the Reaſon why he prayes againſt poverty, is this, *leſt I be Poor and Steal, and the Name of God be taken in Vain.* Where ſee, that he only prayeth againſt Poverty upon this account, leſt it might occaſion him to Sin, and Diſhonour God. *Agur* doth not ſay, leſt I be poor and Steal, and be Whipt, and Stockt, or Hanged; but, *leſt the Name of God be taken in Vain.*

2. Concerning the keeping off, of Afflictions. There is a praying either againſt,

1. The Things themſelves.
2. The Evil of the things.

1. Againſt the Things themſelves. For that, we ſay, as formerly, We ought not to pray Abſolutely, but with Submiſſion.

2. There is a praying againſt the Evil of the things. So we may pray abſolutely againſt the Evil of the Evils, though we may may not pray abſolutely againſt the Afflictions, yet againſt the Sting of the Affliction. The Apoſtle *Paul*, calleth Sin, the Sting of Death; and it is the Sting of every Affliction: and againſt the Sting, we may pray abſolutely.

Thus for the firſt, concerning praying for the keeping off of Afflictions.

2. Con-

2. Concerning praying for the taking off Afflictions. So, theſe Rules are to be obſerved.

1. We muſt not put our wills, as a Law to God's. Then it is right, when, while we deſire God to remove the Affliction, we get our hearts willing to bear the Affliction, if God will have it ſo.
2. In praying for the removal of them, there muſt be a Submiſſion to the Will of God, in relation to all Circumſtances; to wit, the time and manner of removing. We muſt ſubmit to his Wiſdom for the means, and be content to wait his Leaſure, for the time of taking them off.
3. We muſt chooſe rather Affliction, than Sin; and pray more for the taking away of Sin, then the taking off Affliction. It was a *Pharoah* that prayed only for the taking off of Affliction, *Exod.* 10. 17. *Pray to the Lord your God, that He may take away from me, this Death only.* He was only, for having his Judgment taken away, not his Sin.
4. We muſt pray more, for God's Sanctifying Afflictions to us, then for his Removing them from us. That the Rod may do its work for which it is ſent, before it be taken off; that we may be better'd by the Affliction, before we are freed from the Affliction.

Thus in Anſwer to the Firſt Queſtion.

CHAP. V.

CHAP. V.

The Second Queſtion.

IF a Man know not, *What is good for a man in this Life*; Is it then Lawfull for a man to pray for the things of this Life, *viz.* Riches, &c? Since he knoweth not, but they may be Hurtful for him. His proſperity may be his Ruine, his Table may be his Snare; and that which he thought was for his Welfare, may become his Trap. To this Queſtion I ſhall give an Anſwer

1. In General.
2. More Particular.

I. In General, I Anſwer thus: That it is Lawful to pray for the things of this Life; although we know not, whether they are *good for Man in this Life.* There are theſe Arguments to make it good.

1. Riches, and Health, and the Comforts of this Life, are in themſelves Bleſſings of God. They flow from Him, who is the Fountain of Good; and are, in themſelves, Streams that iſſue from that Fountain, and ſpeak His Goodneſſe. They are ſome of thoſe things, by which, He that is Good (as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks) *doth good to his Creatures.* Acts 14.17. *God left not Himſelf without Witneſs, in that he did Good, and gave them Rain, and Fruitful Seaſons; filling their hearts with Joy and Gladneſs.* So, upon that account, they may be pray'd for.

2. The things of this Life may be prayed for,

In

In that our Saviour hath taught us to pray for *our Daily Bread.* Where, by Bread, is meant all thoſe Good things that are neceſſary for this Life. Bread is there a Comprehenſive word, being *the Staff of Life*; And ſo call'd *the Staff of Bread.* And by a Synechdoche it is put for All, both Neceſſary and Comfortable ſupports of mans Life. Now, being to pray for *our Daily Bread,* we may pray for what is Neceſſary and Comfortable for Life.

3. Outward *Good* things are neceſſary for our Uſes, and for our Well-being in this World. *Mat.* 6. 32. *Your Heavenly Father knoweth, that you have need of all theſe things.* In Prayer, there is a making known of our Needs and Wants to God; not only Spiritual, but Temporal too; not only thoſe that relate to our Souls, but alſo to our Bodies. The Apoſtle bids us, *Phil.* 4. 6. *In nothing be careful, but let your Wants be made known to God.* Then no doubt, but we may Lawfully pray for all Comfortable, and Suitable ſupplies to our Wants.

4. Theſe Outward things do not of themſelves Hurt. Of themſelves they make none Evil. Outward things are to Men, as they are to Them. It is not from the things Themſelves, but from Luſts within that they become Evil. The *Poyſon* is not in the Flower, but in the nature of the Spider: So the Evil of Outward things, is not in the things Themſelves, but from our Luſts, that turn them into Evil. It is not mens Poſſeſſions, but mens Corruptions that make them to become Evil to them. When a mans Table comes to be his Snare, the Creatures are not to be blamed, but a mans own Luſts. The Apoſtle, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. ſpeaks of the Corrupti-

ons

ons that are in the world through Luſt. The World, and the things of the world are the Object; but the Cauſe why they become Evil to us, is Luſt. The Fault, why men are Covetous, or Senſual, or Effeminate, is not in Gold, or Wine, or Women; but in Mens Senſual Affections, and naughty Diſpoſitions. So it is Obſervable, when St. *John*, 1 *John* 2. 16. doth Sum up, what of the World is oppoſite to the Love of God, He doth not name the Objects, but the Luſts. He doth not ſay, What ever is in the World is Pleaſure, or Honour, or Profit; but he names, *The Luſts of the Eye, The Luſts of the Fleſh, and the Pride of Life; And theſe are not of the Father, but are of the World.* (i. e.) Theſe are not of God, as Riches, and Honour, and outward things are; but of that world, that man hath made within himſelf, by his own Corrupt deſires, and Senſual Luſts and Affections. By this you ſee, The Evil is not in the things themſelves, but in our ſelves; We find, they are ſuch things as are Conſiſtent with Grace and Holineſſe. We read of *Abrahams* and *Jobs* Wealth and Riches. St. *Auſtin*, ſpeaking of theſe Worldly things ſaith, *Dantur bonis ne putentur mala, dantur malis ne putentur ſumma bona.* It is a certain Truth, That God never giveth any thing in it ſelf Evil, to thoſe that are Good; ſo, neither doth he give the chiefeſt good Things, to thoſe that are Evil. So that when theſe things become Evil to men, it is from a mans own Corruptions. When men make theſe things, the Bellows of Pride, the Fewel of Uncleanneſs, the Inſtruments of Revenge; This is not from themſelves, but mans making uſe of them for ſuch ends, for which they were not Ordained.

So when the Gospel calls upon us, to Renounce the World, The meaning is not, That we should cast the things of the World out of our Possession, but out of our Affection. To be Rich, is not Inconsistent with Religion, it is mans abusing of Riches, &c. that makes them Evil to us.

5. The things of this life, may be helps to Christians, to further them in doing *good:* though they be seeming hindrances; yet, by a wise Improvement, they may become great Advantages, for the performing of Works both of Piety and Charity. If a man have but the Art, of placing these things aright, They may help a man toward Heaven. As we see it is with a Trunk of Mony; Let a man put it upon his Head, it boweth him down; But let him put it under his Feet, it lifteth him up. 'Tis the Apostle's Command, in 1*Tim.* 6. 18. to those that are Rich, *that they be Rich in Good Works*; Letting them know, That they have an opportunity put into their hands, of doing good with their Wealth. See what our Saviour saith, *Luke* 16. 9. *Make you Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon.* But, why doth our Saviour call it, The unrighteous Mammon? Not because Riches are so in themselves, but because of mens either Evil getting, or using of them. *q. d.* Things that many men abuse, and so make them the Riches of Iniquity; may be so imployed, as to be helps to further *good.* And therefore, it was a hard saying, and Censure of a Father (although I confess it is sometimes true) *Omnis Dives aut iniquus, aut iniqui Hæres,* Every Rich man is either an Oppressor, or the Son of an Oppressor.

6. Wealth and Riches, and the Things of this Life,

Life, are the things that come within a Promiſe. It is ſaid of him that feareth the Lord, *Pſal.* 112. *That Wealth and Riches ſhall be in his Houſe* (i. e.) when God ſeeth it good for him. For all Temporal Promiſes muſt be underſtood with an Exception. The Rule is this, concerning ſuch Promiſes, That they do not Intimate what ever ſhall be, but what ever befalleth a Godly man ſhall be a Bleſſing. The Fruit of a Promiſe, ſhall not be the Fruit of a loſer Providence; but to a Godly man, they are the Fruits of a Promiſe, and therefore may be prayed for.

Thus for the Anſwer in General.

II. The Particular Anſwer is this. Though we ſaid, and have ſhewed, that it is lawful to pray for outward things, yet it muſt have its Rules and Limitations, and that upon this Ground, That we know not what is good for a man in this life. Concerning praying for outward things, we muſt know this, they muſt not be prayed for;

1. Abſolutely.
2. Ultimately.

1. Abſolutely. In praying for outward things, we muſt not pray for them, but with a Submiſſion to the Will of God. In praying for them, we muſt take heed of making our wills a Law to God's. For, as I ſhewed you before, That the Evils of this life, are not Evils to be abſolutely prayed againſt; ſo neither are the things of this life, abſolutely to be prayed for. Then it is Right, if, when you are begging of them, you can find in your heart to be without them, if God will have it ſo. As for thoſe Good things that relate to another Life, they are

to be absolutely prayed for; but, for the things of this life, we are not to do so; we must not so desire them, as not content to be denyed. This was *Rachels* sin, in her desire of children, *Give me Children or else I dye.* She would have no Nay, but she must have children, and she payed dear for it, for she died in Child-bearing; she would die if she had not children, and she died in bringing forth a child, whom she called *Benoni.* Thus *Israel* would have no Nay, but they must have a King. And thus the hearts of many, are so set upon the things of this life, that they cannot brook a denial of them; and think God doth not love them, if He do not grant those Requests they make for them.

2. In praying for outward things, as you may not pray for them Absolutely, so you are not to pray and seek for them, Ultimately, but to make them Subordinate to Gods Glory. It is lawful to pray for Health, and Wealth, and the good things of this Life; but it is to be done, with a respect to the Glory of God, that we may be enabled the better, to Serve and Honour Him with them; and not that our sensual desires, and sinful lusts, may be satisfied, *Jam.* 4. 3. The Apostle telleth us, of some that did Ask; but he telleth us, that their End was not right; for they did ask, that they might consume it upon their Lusts. This asking is Evil and Unlawful. How many are there, that would have God bestow that upon them, that they would bestow upon their Lusts, as Health, and long Life; that they may live the more Pleasantly, Wealth, that they may fare Deliciously every day; Great Estates, that they may Raise Themselves and Families, that they may be some-body in the world,

and

and may lord it over others. It is not right, when men desire outward things, that they may live more comfortably, and not Serve God more chearfully.

Quest. But some may Ask, How may I know, in praying for the things of *this Life*, that I have a respect to Gods Glory; since the Heart of man is so Deceitful?

Answ. By these things, it may be known.

1. He that makes Gods Glory his End, in seeking these things, is as much in begging Grace to Use them for God, as he is to have them. Where the desires of a man, after these things, are right, they are not single desires after the things themselves, but conjoyned and coupled with desires of Grace; whereby he may be inabled to serve and honour God with them. This is his most earnest Request, That, if God put any such price into his Hand, he would give him a Heart to make use of it for his Glory. *Prov.* 3. 9. *Honour God with thy Substance.* So, this is the great Request of those that eye the Glory of God, in their begging the things of *this life*; That, if God see it good to bestow those things on them, that he would give them to honour Him with their Riches, with their Health, and with all their Worldly Enjoyments. When it is otherwise, our praying for them is not right. There are many that only look after the things themselves, but never begg for Grace, by which they should make a right Improvement of them. Then it is right, when a man desireth rather to be denied the Things themselves, than Grace to use them; when he can say, *Lord give me not Riches, give me not Ho-*

nour, give me not Worldly Poſſeſſions, if thou do not withall give me a Heart to uſe them to thy Glory.

2. This ſpeaketh it, When a man can take a Denial, and be content to go Without them, when God will have it ſo. This ſheweth man's reſpecting the Glory of God, above the things themſelves. Such an one ſits down contented, when God is pleaſed to croſs his deſires, and to deny him his requeſts: When he beggeth Health, and Wealth, and the good things of this life, and is denied; he layeth his hand upon his mouth, and concludeth, that, God did not ſee thoſe things to make for his Glory, nor for the good of him that begged them. We read of *Balaam*, Num. 22. when he was ſent for by *Balak*, that he gave out, he would not eye the offers that *Balak* made him, but only the Command of God. Yet, when he was told, He ſhould not go, he enquires again, and again, till at laſt God bid him go; which ſhews, he eyed more the Promotion and Advancement he expected from *Balak*, then the Command of God. So ſome, in ſeeking the things of this life, are ſo impatient, that, though the Lord have denied them once, and again, yet they will be asking them again; It is good for men to do ſo, in ſeeking after the things of another life, but not in ſeeking after the things of this life.

3. This ſpeaketh it, When, in praying for the things of this Life, he prayes only for ſuch a meaſure and proportion of them, as may leaſt expoſe him to ſin. By this, a man ſhews, in ſeeking of them, he hath en eye to the Honour and Glory of God. Such an one ſeeks not great things for himſelf, but only what is convenient. It was *Agur*'s prayer, *Prov.* 30.8.

Prov. 30. 8. *That God would feed him with food convenient.* If you ask, why he prayed for convenient Food, and a convenient Eſtate, the Reaſon was this, Becauſe he ſaw danger in extreams; in Poverty on the one hand, and Riches on the other. He ſaw, To be very Rich, or very Poor, was very dangerous, and would put under great Temptations. *q. d.* Lord I would not be Rich, becauſe it is hard to be Rich and Good; and I would not be poor, becauſe it is hard to be poor, and not to ſin. Therefore he prayeth for ſuch an Eſtate as did beſt ſuite with holineſs, and would leaſt expoſe him, to temptations unto ſin; this ſpeaks his eying the Glory of God. He prayeth againſt Riches, and abundance, but it is not upon this account, becauſe they may make a man envyed, or cauſe cares and troubles, for he that encreaſeth Riches, increaſeth them: But it is purely upon another account, (viz) the Glory of God, as appears by his Reaſon given, *verſ.* 9. *Leſt I be full and forget Thee*, and ſay, *Who is the Lord?* Which ſhews, that it was Gods Honour and Glory, that he did Reſpect. So when he prayeth againſt Poverty, he doth not make this his Reaſon, leſt I be deſpiſed and trodden under foot, but, *leſt the Name of my God be taken in Vain.* So that what he prayed for, was in Relation to Gods Glory. So it is with him that eyes the Glory of God, in ſeeking the things of this life; he ſeeks not great things for himſelf, but only what is proportionable and convenient. He knows, A ſhoo too big for his foot, may hinder him in going, as well as a ſhoo that is too little: A Staff, you know, is a help to a man when he walketh; but a bundle of Staves, both hinder and

burden. It is good for men, in ſeeking the things of *this life*, to ſeek only what is fit and convenient, that they may be the better fitted to be ſerviceable to their God, and to *run the Race that is ſet before them*. Suppoſe a man were to run a Race, and many Suites were laid before him to take his choice, ſome of cloth of Gold, &c. he would not chooſe the moſt Gorgious, but the moſt Convenient, leſt otherways he loſe the Race.

Queſt. Some may Ask, What is a convenient Eſtate?

Anſwer:

1. That which Nature requireth. Nature is content with a little. It was the Saying of a Wiſe man, *He that liveth according to Nature, will find a little, Enough; and He that liveth according to Opinion, will never have Enough.* And it was the Saying of a Gracious man, *Having Food and Rayment, let us therewith be Content.*
2. That is Convenient, that is ſuitable to the Eſtate wherein God hath put us. Some need not ſo much as others do; and it is their Happineſs, if they knew it; as it is for a man to ſee without Spectacles, and to walk without Crutches. It was the ſaying of *Socrates*, when he ſaw great Riches carried through a Town, *How happy am I, that I can live without all this?*
3. That is Convenient, that is requiſite for the comfortable Maintenance of our Families. The Apoſtle ſaith, *He that Provideth not for his own Houſe, is worſe than an Infidel.* Yet *Solomon* ſaith, *There was a*

man,

man, That had neither Son, nor Brother, and yet there was no end of his Labours.

4. This ſpeaketh our reſpecting Gods Glory, in our ſeeking the things of *this life*, Our uſing the Things for God, when he hath beſtowed them on us, and hath granted us our deſire. Do you not ſpend them upon your Luſts? Do you not ſay to the Wedge of Gold, *Thou art my Confidence?* Do you not make them the Fuel for Luſts, and Inſtruments of Revenge? You may know, what your Hearts were in Deſiring them, by the Uſe you afterwards make of them. Remember, Luſt is an earneſt Craver; and will pretend, That what it beggs, is for God, till it hath what it deſireth. It is good for Chriſtians then, to put the Queſtion to themſelves, *What God hath the more from them, for that they have received from Him?*

To cloſe up the Anſwer to this Queſtion; Let me tell you, Although it be lawful to pray for the things of *this life*; yet not *Principally* and *Primarily*, but with reſpect to the Inferiority of their Nature and Uſes. Remember ſtill, Theſe are not the Cheif things to be ſought after. *Mat. 6. 33. Seek firſt the Kingdom of God, &c.* We ought, in our Prayers, to give the precedency, and preeminence to Spiritual good things. Heavenly things are to be preferred before Earthly; and we are to place them in our Prayers, as God hath placed them. Though we may Lawfully pray for the things of *this life*, yet we pray Unlawfully, when we are more earneſt for them, than for the things that relate to *another life*. God took it well from *Solomon*, when he was left to his choice,

and

and bid to ask what he would, he only asked *Wiſdom*. He did not ask Riches, nor Long Life, nor the Life of his Enemies. Yet God gave him Thoſe. The way to have the things of this World, is, chiefly to ſeek after the things of another World. Theſe things you may pray for Abſolutely, *viz.* Grace, and an Intereſt in Chriſt, and Pardon of Sin, and all Soul-Mercies; and all the Good things that relate to *another life*. We read of ſome, in *Hoſ.* 7 14. that *howled upon their Beds, for Corn and Wine*. Thoſe were the things they only ſought after; and their Prayers was but a brutiſh Crie, compared to the *howling of a Dog*. A gracious Soul pants after the things of another Life, when others pant only after the things of this Life. The Prophet ſpeaks of ſuch, *Amos* 2. 7. who pant after the *Duſt of the Earth*: But *David*'s Soul panted after God, *Pſal.* 42. 1. *So panteth my Soul after Thee, O God*. Then it is Right, when we pray for the things of this Life, with a ſerious conſideration of their Lowneſs, and Baſeneſs, and Inferiority, being compared with the things of Eternity, and another Life.

Thus for the ſecond Queſtion.

The Third Queſtion, is This:

WHether our being Ignorant of *What is good for us in this Life*, doth not warrant to adventure on, and undertake things (as we ſay) Hand Over-head, or at all Adventure; without Cir-

Circumſpection, Conſideration, prudential Foreſight, or providential Care. As in the buſineſs of Marriage, and of managing all our buſineſſes and affairs in this Life. Some may ſay, I ſee I know not *what is good for me in this life*: And therefore, the thing I am about, notwithſtanding all my Prudence, and Care, and Circumſpection, may (for ought I know) be for Evil to me; and, without all this Care and Circumſpection, may be for Good to me. So the Queſtion is, Whether this Truth doth not deſtroy all Prudential and Providential care about the management of the Affairs of this Life.

Anſwer. No ſuch matter: It makes nothing againſt that. And that, we ſhall ſhew in theſe following Propoſitions; which I ſhall briefly name.

1. Divine Providence doth not deſtroy Humane Prudence; Which is ſo much commended by *Solomon*, in his Book of the *Proverbs*.
2. Gods Providence doth ſometimes make up mans Improvidence. But that is no warrant at all, for a man therefore to be Improvident.
3. It is a Tempting of God, when we neglect the Means, for bringing to paſſe the End.
4. It is creating Croſſes to our ſelves; and, for which we muſt only thank our ſelves. We are not called to bear Croſſes of our own making, but of God's ſending.
5. It is made one of the Characters of a Righte-

Righteous man, That he *guides his Affairs with Diſcretion, Pſal.* 112. 5.

6.] There is almoſt a whole Chapter ſpent in the Commendation of a Virtuous Woman's Prudential and Providential care in providing for her Husband, Children, and Family; as you may ſee, *Prov.* 31.

7. Such a Concluſion would juſtifie that prophane Saying of ſome, *That if they are Ordained to be ſaved, they ſhall be Saved, let them live as they liſt.* Theſe ſeparate between the Means and the End. When as God hath appointed the Means as well as the End. So do ſuch, in reſpect of the Affairs of this Life; that lay aſide Prudence, And ſay, *If God ſee it good for me, it ſhall be Good.*

Thus for the Third Queſtion.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

The Application.

1. IT is uſeful by way of Information. If this be true, that no man infallibly knows what is *good* for a man in this life; why, then it is not to be wondred at, that we find men ſo wofully miſtaken in their Judgments, about Conditions, and God's outward Diſpenſations. The Prophet ſpeaks of ſome, that call *evil good*, and *good evil*: So man, through his ignorance, of what is *good* for him in this life; is apt to think that condition *good* for him, that is *evil*; and that condition *evil* for him, that is *good*. We read *Job* 11. 10. *Vain man would be wiſe*. So, ignorant man would be thought wiſe, in the knowing of things that are above him, and beyond his line, and that come not within the Sphear of his knowledg. Though he know not, how to make a Judgment of Conditions, yet he will be offering at it; nay as confidently undertake it, as Aſtrologers and Gypſies do, to tell people their Fortunes. But we may ſay of men in this caſe, as the Apoſtle doth of thoſe, *Rom.* 1.22. *Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe*, ἐμωράνθησαν *they became fools*. So while men profeſs themſelves to be ſo wiſe, as to know what is *good* for a man in this life, they have but ſhewed themſelves fools; as hath appeared by their groſs miſtakes about Conditions. The Heathens of old, though they thought themſelves wiſe, yet ſhewed themſelves fools in their Opinions, concerning the *Chiefeſt Good*, (which did amount to the number of 288.)

And

And ſuch fools do men ſhew themſelves in their Opinions, concerning inferiour *good things*, and what is *good* for a man in this life. But, as the Lord ſaith of the cuſtoms of the people, *Jer.* 10. 3. *That they are Vain*: So, may we ſay of the Opinions of people, concerning conditions. *Solomon* ſpeaks of ſome, *Eccleſ.* 7. 10. who would undertake to make a Judgment of Times, and did ask, *Why were the former times better than theſe?* But *Solomon* telleth ſuch, *They did not enquire wiſely concerning them.* (i. e.) They were but fools in thinking ſo. So there are many that inquire not wiſely concerning conditions, and what is *good* and *evil* for a man in this life.

I ſhall acquaint you with three ſorts of perſons, that are thus miſtaken about outward Conditions.

1. Some there are, that, looking upon Honour and Riches, and ſuch things as are in themſelves good, from thence conclude, They are things good for them; and if they have them, conclude it is well with them.
2. Some there be, who looking upon Afflictions, as things evil in themſelves; conclude from thence, that it is evil for them in this life, that they are Afflicted.
3. Some there are, who hearing that it hath been good for ſome that they have been Afflicted, do from thence conclude, that, becauſe they are Afflicted, their condition is good. Thus there are ſome, that think the better of themſelves, for their being Afflicted.

I ſhall ſpeak ſomewhat, to ſhew, How all theſe may be miſtaken.

1. For the firſt. Some there are, that think, becauſe Honour, and Riches, &c. are good things in themſelves, that therefore they are good for them. Give me leave to ſhew you, How wofully ſuch perſons may be miſtaken in doing of it. I ſhall preſent you with ſome of thoſe falſe Grounds and Principles, upon which ſuch go, who make ſuch a judgment; (*viz.*) Four,

1. That muſt needs be good for a man in this life, that is in it ſelf, and in its own nature good.
2. That muſt needs be good for man in this life, that ſuits with, and anſwers to, a mans deſires.
3. That muſt needs be good for a man in this life, that hath been good for others.
4. That muſt needs be good for a man in this life, that God gives and beſtows upon a man in this life.

I ſhall ſpend a little time, in the examining theſe Grounds, to ſee whether ſuch a Concluſion may be built upon them.

1. The Firſt is this. That muſt needs be good for a man in this life, that is in it ſelf good.

Anſw. It follows not: That which is good in its ſelf, may be a convenient good for me, or you, or other. That, that makes a good thing, to be a convenient good to us, is its ſuitableneſs to, and agreeableneſs with, our Conſtitutions, Spirits, and Diſpoſitions. Here is the miſtake of many, that when they hear, that Honour, and Riches, &c. are things

things good in themſelves, they preſently conclude they are good for them; without conſidering, whether they are a convenient good, never examining how they ſuit with their Spirits and Diſpoſitions. The Apoſtle, ſpeaking of the Creatures, that God hath made and ordained, for the nouriſhment and preſervation of mankind, telleth us, 1 *Tim.* 4. 4. *That every Creature of God is good*: So, Fleſh is good, and Fiſh is good, and Wine is good; yet we know, it may not be good for ſome to eat Fiſh, & for ſome to drink Wine; Wine, that is in it ſelf good, yet it is not good for him that is in the fit of a Feaver. So that here lieth the miſtake, Men diſtinguiſh not, between what is good in it ſelf, and good for them. Thus it is with moſt; they look upon the things of this life, without themſelves, but look not inward upon their own Spirits and Diſpoſitions; which *Agur* no doubt did, when he prayed againſt Riches, and that God would feed him with food convenient.

2. Conſider this, That a thing may be good in it ſelf, that may become evil to a man in this life, through his Abuſe of it; and therefore it followeth not, that, that is alwayes good for a man in this life, that is good in it ſelf: Things good in themſelves, may through mans corruption be abuſed. The Apoſtle *Jude*, ſpeaketh of ſome, *that turn Grace, into Wantonneſs*: And if the corruption of man may riſe ſo high, to abuſe that, that is placed in the higheſt Rank of good things; then much more, to abuſe thoſe good things, that are of a lower and inferiour nature. It is obſervable, that we are moſt apt to offend in *licitis*, in thoſe things that are in themſelves lawful; becauſe we are there leaſt ſuſpi-

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cious of danger. We ſuſpect not the things, becauſe they are in themſelves good, which, through our abuſe of them, become evil to us. The Flowre is in its own nature, ſweet and good, but through the Venemous nature of the Spider, what is drawn from it, is turned into Poyſon. So it is in this caſe, mens corruptions make thoſe things Evil and Poyſonous, that are in themſelves good. We muſt know, Outward things are to us, as we are to them; our outwards, are according to what our inwards are; things good in themſelves, become evil to us, when through our corruptions, they are made to be but food and fewel for our Luſts. It may be ſaid of many, It was ill for them, that they were ſo Great, and ſo Rich; had they not been ſo, they had not been ſo bad, and ſo wicked. *Solomon* ſaith, *The proſperity of fools, deſtroyeth them.* One of the Fathers, wrote thus to one, *Monacho fervido, Abbati tepido, Epiſcopo frigido, Archiepiſcopo diſſoluto.* To the Zealous Monk, the luke-warm Abbot, the cold Biſhop, and the diſſolute Arch-Biſhop. Thus we ſee, that ſome are the worſe for their outwards.

Thus for the firſt Ground of mens miſtakes about Conditions. Now for the ſecond.

2. Ground of mens miſtakes about Conditions, is this, That muſt needs be good for a man in this life, that pleaſeth him, and ſuits with his deſires. And hereupon many do infer this, That it muſt needs be good for them in this life, ſince it is that they deſire. Now I ſhall ſhew you, how wofully miſtaken ſuch perſons may be concerning their condition, that ſay, It is as I would have it.

Conſider this, That a man's having what his heart deſireth, doth not at all, ſpeak the perſon good. For we ſhall find, in *Pſal.* 73. That thoſe were as bad, as bad could be, that yet had what heart could wiſh. It doth not alwayes ſpeak, that that is good for us, which falleth out according to our deſires. Mens deſires may be corrupt, and inordinate, and carried out after things that are evil for them. We read of the Iſraelites, *Pſal.* 78. 29. They required meat for their luſts, (and ſee what followeth) they had their heart's deſire. But by the event, you will find, it was not good for them. So by this you ſee, this is a falſe ground that men go upon, in making a Judgment of Conditions. And this the very Heathens ſaw by light of nature. *Philip* of *Macedon*, had on one and the ſame day a Son born; the winning of a Prize, by his Chariots, at the *Olympian Games*; and a Victory his Army had the ſame day obtained. He was ſo daunted with the News being ſo good, that he feared a miſchief would enſue; and therefore deſired the Gods, to mix ſome Adverſity with it. Remember, the things of this life, though they ſuit with our deſires, are ſo far from being good for us, that it were good for us ſometimes, that our deſires were not granted. How many are there, that have bleſſed God for ſuch a Providence! Providence doth ſometimes croſs a man, and turn him out of the way of his deſires, for his good. As *Poſſidonius*, in the life of St. *Auguſtine*, hath a memorable Story, He going to Viſit a place, with his guide, miſtook his way, and ſo eſcaped the hands of ſome bloody *Donatiſts*, that lay in wait to take away his life. God ſometimes leads his people, out of the way of their

their desires; for the avoiding of some danger, that may lie in the things desired.

Thus for the Second Ground, upon which men go, in making a Judgment of Conditions.

3. Ground upon which men go, in making a Judgment of Conditions, is this: That must needs be good for a man in this life, that hath been good for others. If they were good for *Abraham*, &c. Why may they not be good for me? And here I shall shew you, how upon this ground many are wofully mistaken about Conditions.

It follows not: I told you before, that the things of this life, are so to us, as we are to them. Those Godly Men that had those things, had hearts and spirits fitted for them. It doth not therefore follow, That we have. It is, as if a man should say, This Shoo fits such and such a mans foot, and therefore it will fit mine. We are not to look so much upon the condition, as the Graces that belong to the Condition. Had *Abraham* a prosperous condition? Consider withal, what Graces he, and others had, and see whether you have the same. There are Prosperity-Graces, and Adversity-Graces: without which, neither Prosperity or Adversity is good for a man. The condition was not simply good for them, but as they were furnished with such graces as made them fit for their condition. In a word, Consider this, The things of this life, as of themselves, they never did any man hurt; So, let me tell you, Of themselves they never did any man good, I say of themselves. Their doing a man good, cometh from a higher Good; and that is, Grace to Improve them for the Glory of God, and our

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own and others good. There was never any man made better, by his being Rich; but many that have been Rich, have been the better for their being Gracious, with their being Rich.

4. Ground that men go upon, is this: That muſt needs be good for a man in this life, that God beſtows upon a man in this life. But Honour, and Riches,&c. are God's Gifts and Diſpenſations; therefore muſt needs be good for a man in this life.

We ſhall a little examine this Ground, and ſhew how men may be wofully miſtaken, that from thoſe premiſes make ſuch a concluſion. Their miſtake lieth in this, Their not conſidering, How God is ſaid to beſtow theſe things.

1. They diſtinguiſh not, between what God giveth *ex Largitate* out of his Bounty; and as He is good to all: and what He giveth *ex Promiſſo*, by Promiſe. And the not conſidering of this, is one great cauſe of mens being miſtaken, in making a judgment of a proſperous condition. So that, as our Saviour told the Sadduces in another caſe, That they did erre, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God. So we may ſay of theſe, That they erre, not knowing the Scriptures, and the Intentions of God in the beſtowing outward things. While a man hath the things of this life, beſtowed on him by God, only out of Bounty, he cannot ſay, They are good for him, till he find, they come in by Covenant and Promiſe, as I ſhall ſhew you more largly afterwards. When *Eſau* asked *Jacob*, *Whoſe Children are theſe?* He anſwered, *Theſe are the Children that God hath Graciouſly* (or, in Mercy) *given me*. No man can ſay, Theſe are the Riches, and this is the Proſperity that God hath

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in mercy given me, till he finds they flow from another Fountain, than that of general Bounty. *Luther* said of the *Turkish* Empire, That, how great soever it was, yet it was but a Crust, that the great Housekeeper had cast to a Dog. Remember, it is the Covenant that forms a Mercy.

2. They distinguish not, between things in the Dispensation, and in the Intention of God. Hence ariseth the Mistake. Many judg of the Intention, by the Dispensation; and if such things be dispensed, that be in themselves good, they presently think they are intended for good to them. Whereas, *Solomon* telleth such, *Eccles.* 9. 1. *No man knoweth love by any outward thing, &c.* Not by Riches, nor Honour, nor by outward Prosperity. Gods Hand, and Gods, Heart doth not alwayes go together. His Hand may seem to make for men, when His Heart is against them; as on the contrary, His Hand may seem to be against men, when his Heart is not. We read, *Jer.* 32. 41. When God said, He would do his People good, *He would do them good with his whole Heart, and with his whole Soul.* We find, *Psal.* 78. 29. God gave the Israelites their heart's desire, they had what they would; But see what followeth, *While the meat was yet in their mouths, the Wrath of God came upon them.* Remember this, The best good things of this life, may be bestowed in Anger, *Hos.* 13. 11. *I gave them a King in mine anger.*

3. They distinguish not, between Gods Giving Hand, and Gods Sanctifying Hand. Between the Things given, and Grace that fits for the Using of them. God sometimes gives the Things, when He gives not the Grace to make a Right use of

them. There are ſome, who, if they find but a Giving Hand, look no further, whether there be a Sanctifying Hand, or no. Know this, While you look upon a Giving Hand only, you can never make a right Judgement of a Proſperous condition, till you look upon the other Hand, *viz.* the Sanctifying Hand. Till you find, that with Proſperity, you have alſo Proſperity-Graces given too.

4. They diſtinguiſh not, between what cometh in by a Permiſſive providence, and by an Approving providence. As there is Gods Permiſſive and Approving Will, ſo it is in reſpect of Providences, as relating to the good things of this life. Some men have them onely by a permiſſive providence. Some there are that God maketh Rich, as it is ſaid, God made *Abraham* Rich; ſome God permits to be Rich, and hindreth them not. Thus, ſome by ſinful, and unjuſt, and unlawful Means, get the things of this life, when God approves not of it, *Hoſ.* 8. 4. God ſaith, *They ſett up Kings, but not by Him; and Princes, but He knew it not.* The meaning is, That He approved it not. There is a diſpoſition in men, (what courſe ſoever they take to compaſs the things of this life) to draw God unto a liking, and approbation of what they do, (let it be never ſo unlawfully done) As thoſe, *Zach.* 11. 5. *Bleſſed be the Lord, for I am Rich.* How much do men father upon God, as his Gifts and Bleſſings, which they have got by their own injuſtice and oppreſſion?

Object. But ſome will ſay, Is it not the Bleſſing of the Lord that maketh Rich? And, if I am Rich, muſt I not ſay, It is by the bleſſing of the Lord?

Anſw.

Anſw. It is true, and the place, is, *Prov.* 10. 22. *The Bleſſing of the Lord, it maketh Rich, and addeth no ſorrow with it.* This is a truth. And yet it followeth not from hence, that, Thoſe that have Riches, and outward things, have them as a Bleſſing. This will appear, if you conſider, what is meant by *Rich* in the Text; It is not the having the things, but comfort, and contentment, in the things, that ſpeaks men Rich. So you find, the latter words in the Text are Exegetical, and expound the former, *(viz.) He addeth no ſorrow with it.* There are three Vultures that commonly feed upon a Rich mans heart, *(viz.)* Care in getting, Fear in keeping, and Grief in loſing. But now the Bleſſing of the Lord, driveth away all theſe. So that it doth not follow, That the bare having of the things, is the Bleſſing, but the having the Riches of Contentment with them. So that the meaning is this, That it is the bleſſing of the Lord, that gives Comfort and Contentment with the things; and this is that indeed, that ſpeaks a man truly Rich. Many have Gold and Silver, and Poſſeſſions in abundance, and cannot be ſaid to be Rich, becauſe they have not the comfortable uſe of them, and contentment with them. So that it is the Comfort and Contentment, that is that Bleſſing that maketh Rich.

Thus I have examined the Grounds, upon which many go, in making a Judgment of a Proſperous Condition. And from all that hath been ſaid, their Miſtakes will appear, by conſidering of theſe following Queries.

1. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That thoſe things are good for a man in this life, that bad men have had, as well as good; and for the moſt part, the greateſt portion of them? Upon this ground, the very Heathens were drawn to a contempt of thoſe things, becauſe they ſaw, that for the moſt part, they were in the hands of thoſe, that were the worſt of men. *Seneca* could ſay, Who would eſteem of Riches and Honours, when he ſeeth them caſt, *in hoc canum in has ſordes*, upon ſuch Dung-hills; ſpeaking of Honours conferred upon *Sylla*. Who would eſteem of Beauty, (ſaith another) which a Whore may have, as well as an honeſt Woman? *Jer.* 12. 1. The Prophet obſerved, *That the way of the Wicked did Proſper*. And *Pſal.* 73. That the worſt of Men, *had waters of a full Cup wrung out to them, and had what heart could wiſh*.

2. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That is good for a man in this life, that never made a man Good? Where is the man that can come forth and ſay, That his Riches and Honours, did ever change his heart or reform his life?

3. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That thoſe things are good for a man in this life, that have made many men worſe, through their Abuſe of them? To how many have they become a Trap, and Snare, and occaſions of Sin? How many men hath proſperity undone? *Nehem.* 13. 20. Did not *Solomon*, King of Iſrael, ſin by thoſe things? yet among many Nations there was none like him, Beloved of his God. How Conſcientious was *David*, when he was *David* the Perſecuted? but how careleſs, when he was *David* the King? It is obſerved of *Rome*, That it was never more Wicked, then when

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it was moſt Flouriſhing. And it is obſerved of the Church, That it had leaſt Purity, when it had moſt outward Proſperity.

4. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That thoſe things are good for a man in this life, that are things ſo uncertain? They come and go, paſs and run, like a River. The Apoſtle calls them uncertain Riches, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Solomon* telleth us, *They make themſelves Wings, and fly away. Prov.* 23. 5. Yea, their being is ſo ſhort, that they are ſaid not to be; for ſo ſaith *Solomon* in the ſame *Verſ. Why wilt thou ſet thy heart upon that which is not?*

5. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That is good for a man in this life, that cannot in the leaſt cure a mans vanity, or adde any thing of worth, or excellency to him? When he hath all the things of the world, yet he is ſtill but vain and empty Man; he is ſtill *Adam*, weak, frail, fleſhly, and ſtill vain. Hence it is, that *Solomon* ſheweth, that Riches cannot be a mans happineſs, *Eccleſ.* 6.10. *That which hath been, is named already, and it is known that it is Man:* (i. e.) Call him what you will, Great, or Rich, or Honourable, yet he is Man ſtill, (i. e.) crazy, frail, mortal man; outward things do not amend his nature and conſtitution. This the Pſalmiſt telleth us, *Pſal.* 39.5. *Surely, every man at his beſt eſtate, is altogether vanity.* At his beſt eſtate, let him be never ſo happy, in reſpect of worldly eſtate, yet it doth not cure his vanity, he is ſtill but vanity.

6. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That that is good for a man in this life, that will do a man no good in the time of his greateſt need, and ſtraits, and exigencies? *Prov.* 11. 4. *Riches profit not in the day of*

of Wrath. And we have ſeen this made true in the former dayes of common Calamity. In all Changes, we have ſeen, The Greateſt, were the greateſt Sufferers. Great Winds, ſhake moſt the talleſt Cedars, and throw down the ſtrongeſt Oakes. We read, 2 *Kings* 24. *In that Captivity, the Richer Jews were carried away, when the poorer ſort were left to till the land.*

7. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That that is good for a man in this life, that fills the life with ſo many cares, and expoſeth to ſo many dangers, and troubles, and diſquietments? How many are there, whoſe wealth hath coſt them their lives? It had bin good for *Naboth*, he had had no Vineyard. And it was ſaid of the Roman Emperours, That they got nothing by their Advancement, but *ut citius interficerentur*, That they might be killed the ſooner. How many men are there, that had been happy, had not their proſperity deſtroyed them? And this is another Argument, that *Solomon* uſeth to prove, that a mans happineſs lyeth not in Riches. As you may ſee *Eccleſ.* 6. 11. *Seeing there be many things that increaſe vanity, what is man the better?* So, How can thoſe things, that increaſe cares and troubles, make Man the better? *Pſal.* 39. 6. *Man diſquiets himſelf in vain; he heapeth up Riches, and cannot tell, who ſhall gather them.* Nay, *Solomon* tells us, *Eccleſ.* 5. 3. *That he had ſeen Riches laid up for the owners, to their hurt.* *Antigonus* ſaid of his Crown, That if a man knew what cares were wrapt up in it, he would not think it worth taking up. Nay, one ſaith of life it ſelf, *Nemo vitam acciperet ſi daretur ſcientibus.*

8. Who can ſay, That is good for a man in this life,

life, that makes the entrance into Eternal Life ſo difficult? This our Saviour ſheweth, *Luk.* 18.24,25. *That it is hard for a Rich man to enter into Heaven.* Nay, he makes it not only hard, but in a manner Impoſſible; When he ſaith, *It is eaſier for a Camel to go through the eye of a Needle.* Our Saviour meaneth it, of thoſe that have Riches, and truſt in them.

Thus for the firſt ſort of perſons, who think, It is good for them in this life to have Proſperity.

CHAP. VII.

2 THere are ſome think, Afflictions are ill for them in this life; and conclude, it is ill with them, becauſe they are their Portion in this life. I am now to ſhew you, that many are wofully miſtaken in that. I ſhall name to you five things, that men look upon as evil for them in this life. About which they may be deceived; and they may be for good to them.

1. God's hiding his Face from them.
2. God's ſuſpending, and deferring his Anſwers to their prayers.
3. God's denying their particular ſuits.
4. God's depriving them of many dear comforts.
5. God's exerciſing them, with many ſad, and great Afflictions.

We ſhall a little conſider of theſe things; and whether men may not be miſtaken about them, and take them to be evil for them, when they are not ſo.

1. Many think this evil for them, To have God hide his Face from them. And indeed, we find the Godly in Scripture, complain of it, as one of the ſadeſt things. Yet let me tell you, ſuch deſertions, and the withdrawings of the light of Gods Countenance, for a time, may be for Good. That as Chriſt ſaid to his Diſciples, *It is good for you that I go away.* So it is ſometimes good for the People of God, that He turns his Face away. Although it is not a pleaſing good, yet it may be a profitable good.

1. By way of Correction. The Father's frowns are ſometimes neceſſary, though the Children will not ſay ſo. The ſleighting of Divine Favours, cauſeth God to withdraw His Favour, by way of Correction.

2. By way of Inſtruction. So His hiding His Face from his People, teacheth them theſe things.

1. Where their ſtrength lyeth; That in His Light, they ſee Light: That He is the Fountain of Comfort, and that the happineſs of lower Spirits, lieth in Him, who is the Chief of Spirits. How know you, that the Branch of the Tree hath nouriſhment from the Root? Pluck it away from the Tree, and it ſuddenly withereth. Let but the Nurſe, leave the child to it ſelf, and it quickly falleth.

2. It

2. It teacheth men to prize God more, and to long the more after Him. As in the Nothern parts, where the Sun is long abſent, people will get upon the tops of the Mountains, to eſpie and diſcover its ariſing; and happy is he, that can firſt ſee it. For this end, God ſometimes hides His Face, that his People may with more longing, look after the breakings forth of the Light of His Countenance.

3. By way of Prevention. So God hideth His Face.

1. To prevent pride, and to keep His People humble.
2. To keep them from truſting in habits of Grace.

4. By way of Probation. So by this, God tryeth his concerning two things.

1. Whether they can love a hiding God?
2. Whether they can walk dutifully, when God walketh ſtrangely? *Iſa.* 8. 17. *I will waite upon Him, that hideth his face from the Houſe of Jacob.* He reſolved to walk dutifully, though God walked ſtrangely.

Thus you ſee, that Gods hiding his Face from His people, may be for Good.

2. A ſecond thing, that many look upon as Evil for them, is, God's ſuſpending, and deferring Anſwers to their Prayers. Of this, the Godly have complained in Scripture, That they did Cry, and God did not Hear. And yet let me tell you, this may be for Good.

1. To

1. To make His people to be more earneſt Suitors at the Throne of Grace. As we read of the Blind man in the Goſpel, when he cryed to Chriſt to have mercy on him; and being rebuked, he cryed the more earneſtly.

2. To make the Mercy, the more welcome when it cometh. Merchants look for the greateſt return, by that Ship that is longeſt abroad. God keeps a mercy the longer in his Hands, to enrich it the more; and to ſend it forth, as a Bride adorned for her Husband. One cluſter of grapes, when ripe, is better then many when they are green and ſowre. *Abraham* waited long for a Son; but it was, that his Son might be the greater Bleſſing to him.

3. This is that, ſome look upon as evil for them in this life; Gods denying them their particular ſuits. God is pleaſed ſometimes, not only to delay His Anſwers to our Requeſts; but alſo to deny them: and yet this may be for good. God alwayes heareth his people, and anſwers them for their profit, though He doth not alwayes anſwer them according to their wills. As the Phyſitian hears the Patient's requeſt, *Non ad voluntatem, ſed ad ſanitatem*; He reſpects not ſo much the Patient's will, as his health. The Patient calleth for drink, but the Phyſitian gives him a Sirup, or a Julip; which is better. We many times, like the Sons of *Zebedee*, ask we know not what: Inſtead of bread, we ſometimes ask ſtones. God hears to our profit, and Anſwers, though not alwayes according to our wills,

wills. Upon this account, *Abrahams* requeſt, on the behalf of *Iſhmael*; and *Moſes* requeſt, to enter into the Land of *Canaan*, were denyed. Yet they were heard in another thing, and their requeſts granted in another way.

4. This is another thing, that men look upon as evil for them; Gods depriving them of many dear comforts: as when He takes away a Wife out of our boſoms, or breaks an Olive branch off from about our tables, &c. This is lookt upon by us, as evil, and yet it may be for good.

1. It may be to make us to live more to Him, and to lean more on Him; and to ſeek for that in Him, which we ſought in the creature. God ſometimes pulleth away our worldly ſtayes and props, to make us depend more on Him, in whom our ſtrength and comfort lieth.
2. He ſometimes takes away our comforts, to return them better, as he did *Jobs*. Gods pulling down, is ſometimes for this end, to build up better. To make that of Marble, that before was but of Brick. He ſometimes takes a comfort out of our hands, to deliver it again to us, with Intereſt and Advantage.

5. Some look upon this as Evil; Gods exerciſing them with many ſad and ſore Afflictions. And ſome of the Grounds that they go upon, are theſe:

1. That Afflictions are Arguments of Divine Wrath.
2. That they are Uſeleſs.

3. That

3. That they are Bitter, and Burthenſom to Nature.
4. That they are the Fruits of Sin.

We ſhall Examine theſe Grounds, on which many go, in making ſuch a Judgment of an Afflicted Condition.

1. Say ſome, Afflictions are Arguments of Divine Wrath, and Divine Hatred; and therefore not good for man in this Life: ſince ſuch, as upon whom Afflictions fall, are as it were marked out by God, as the Objects of His hatred.

Now let us a little examine this, and ſearch whether it be ſo; and upon ſerious and ſtrict Examination, we ſhall find, It is an Error, being contrary to Scripture-Truth, *Eccleſ.* 9. 1. They who ſay ſo, condemn the generation of the Juſt; we finding, that moſt precious Saints, whom God tendred as the Apple of his Eye, have ſeen and felt, great Afflictions. *Noah*, who found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord, yet ſaw a World drowned. *Job*, of whom God gives a moſt high Character, for his Piety and Uprightneſs, *was ſtript of all to a Shoe-latchet*. *David*, a man after Gods own Heart, was bred up in the School of Affliction. Yea, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, who was the Beloved Son, yet was, *Vir Dolorum*, A man of Sorrows. You ſhall find, that to ſome, the Scripture makes Afflictions to be Arguments of Divine Love, *Prov.* 3. 12. *Whom the Lord loveth, he Correcteth, as a Father doth his Son, in whom he delighteth*. And Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaketh of them, as Arguments of Love, *Rev.* 3. 19. *As many as I love, I Rebuke and Chaſten*. It is true, God delights not in Afflicting; but he loves His Chil-

Children; and that Love moves Him as a Father, to Correct and Afflict them for their Good. He were a cruel Father, that would ſuffer his Child to die for want of a little Phyſick. So that it is a groſſe Miſtake, to think that Afflictions are always the Wounds of an Enemy. But of this, more ſhall be ſpoken afterwards.

2. Some have this Conceit; That an Afflicted condition is an Uſeleſs condition; and therefore not good for a man in this Life. They look upon Afflictions as things that a man may be very well without.

We ſhall a little examine, whether this be true, or no. Many indeed ſay, concerning Afflictions, as thoſe did concerning *Nazareth*, *Can any Good come out of Nazareth?* So, Can any good come out of Afflictions? We muſt know, That Afflictions are as neceſſary for us, as our Daily Bread. It is ſtrange, yet it is true, *Theſe Thorns will bear Grapes, and theſe Thiſtles will bear Figgs:* And there is a Day, when the Saints of God ſhall ſay, They could not have been without ſuch and ſuch Afflictions; and that *It was good for them that they were Afflicted.* Some *Trees* there are, whoſe *Root* is *Bitter*, yet their *Fruit*, *Sweet*. A natural Eye ſeeth no *Good* in them, and taſtes no *Sweetneſs*: And indeed, the Spiritual man, doth not always, at preſent, diſcern what Advantage cometh by them. We muſt know, thoſe *Creatures* that we look upon as *Venemous*, and *Noxious*, are yet uſeful for ſome Ends, and ſome Reſpects: Thus, even *Toads*, &c. The skilful *Apothecary* knoweth how to make *Vipers* and *Scorpions*, Medicinal. Enquire of the Saints of God, and they will tell you, from their own Experience, What good Afflictions have done

them; and that they were *Chaſtned for their Profit*, *Heb.* 12. 10. Afflictions ſeem to be but dry Rods; yet, like *Aaron*'s Rod, they have found them bringing forth both *Bloſſomes*, and *Fruit*.

3. Some ſay, Afflictions are bitter, and burthenſom to Nature; and therefore conclude, they are not good for a man in this Life.

We ſhall a little examine this, to ſee whether there be *Truth* in it. The Premiſes are granted, That they are *Bitter* and *Grievous* to Fleſh and Blood; and the Apoſtle grants it, *Heb.* 12. 11. But the Conſequence is denied, That what is *Bitter* and *Grievous* to *Fleſh* and *Blood*, is therefore *Evil* for a man in this Life. And therefore we are to diſtinguiſh, between what is *Toothſom*, and what is *Wholſom*: Between things, that are *Pleaſingly*, and *Profitably* good. Things may be *Profitably* good for us, that are not *Pleaſingly* good. Thoſe things are ſomtimes moſt *Wholſom*, that are leaſt *Toothſom*. There be ſweet and honied *Poyſons* that Deſtroy. And there be bitter, and diſtaſtful Medicines that do Cure. We know Wormwood is a Bitter hearb, and yet Wholeſom, and Uſeful for Man. Some things may be ſweet in the Mouth, that yet are bitter in the Stomack. *Heb.* 12. 11. The Apoſtle ſaith of Afflictions, though they are *Grievous*, yet they bring forth *the quiet fruit of Righteouſneſs*. Here is the Difference between the Evils of Sin, and of Affliction.

The Evils of Sin, they are Sweet in the Mouth, but bitter afterwards; but the Evils of Affliction are bitter in the Mouth, but ſweet in the Cloſe. Afflictions indeed are bitter, but oftentimes, the bitterneſſe ariſeth from our own Spirits.

When

When our Taſte is Vitiated, ſome things ſeem to be Bitter to us, that otherwiſe would not be ſo. It's our Spirits, that many times Imbitter our Condition, and make our Chain much Heavier, than other waies it would be. There are many Afflict themſelves, when they are under an Affliction. As it is with a *Bird*, when it is gotten into a Room, or Chamber, it might do well, if it ſate ſtill, till the Doors and Caſements were opened; but, till then, with flying againſt the Walls, it doth but hurt and bruiſe it ſelf. To cloſe up this: Phyſitians do obſerve, we are moſt apt to Surfeit of thoſe things that are moſt Sweet and Luſcious. And we find, *Solomon*, the Wiſeſt of Men, prefers bitter things, before Sweet. *Eccleſ.* 7. 3. *Sorrow is better than Laughter.* Ver. 4. *It is better to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than to the Houſe of Feaſting.*

4. Some ſay, That Afflictions are the Effects and Fruits of Sin; And therefore not Good for a man in this Life.

We ſhall a little Examine this Ground. It is true, That Afflictions, were, at firſt, Fruits of Sin. But we muſt make a Difference, between what they were at Firſt, and what Jeſus Chriſt hath made them, to His People now. It is true, they were at firſt, the products of Sin; but to the People of God they are now Changed and Altered. We muſt Diſtinguiſh between what is Sinfully Evil, and Penally Evil. What is Sinfully Evil, is Unchangeably Evil; but Afflictions are but Penally Evil, and may be made good. We muſt know, As there is a Regeneration of Perſons, ſo of Things: To him that is Born again, All is Born again; As

his Outward Comforts are born again, ſo all his Outward Afflictions. It is true, the Evils of Afflictions were firſt Conceived in the womb of Sin, and Sin brought them Forth: but there is the womb of the Covenant, and of the Promiſe, where they are New-formed; and out of which, thoſe things that were Puniſhments, come forth Priviledges; and what was Loſs, comes forth Gain. We read, *Rom.*5.12. *Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin.* We ſee Death came in by Sin. Death, which is *the King of Fears*; and ſo its Attendants with it, *viz.* all Miſeries and Afflictions whatſoever.

Thus, at firſt, they were conceived in, and came forth of, the womb of Sin: but the Covenant, and Promiſe, have changed and altered them; it turneth Miſeries into Mercies, and Puniſhments into Priviledges, and Evil into Good. 1 *Cor.* 3. 22. *All is yours*, (ſaith the Apoſtle to Believers;) and among other things, he names *Death:* where he makes Death one of the Believer's Priviledges, put into the Believer's Charter. And the ſame Apoſtle, *Phil.* 1. 21. ſaith, *To him to Die, was Gain.* Death, in reſpect of its firſt Birth, was Loſſe; but being born again, it becomes Gain. And as Death, which is *the King of Fears*, (and ſo the chief of Evils;) ſo likewiſe, all other Evils are Gain to a believer. *Rom.* 8. 28. *All things work together for Good, to them that love God.*

Thus we have examined the Grounds, that thoſe go upon, in making this Judgment, of an Afflicted Condition; *That it is Evil for a Man in this Life*

I ſhall Conclude with theſe Queries:

1. Who knows, or can ſay, that, That is Evil for a man in this Life, that God inflicts upon the beſt in this Life. We often find the cup of Gall and Wormwood going round about the Saints Tables. We uſually find it the Diet-drink, with which God doth *Phyſick* his *Deareſt Children:* With the ſame Sword wherewith He deſtroyeth his Enemies, He ſometimes wounds his Friends; and all this for their Good. We find, the Godly ones of *Judah* were carried Captives to *Babylon*, as well as others: they loſt their Houſes, Eſtates; were taken out of the Land of their Nativity, and carried into a ſtrange Land: And yet the Lord ſaith of them, *Jer.* 24. 5. *That he had ſent them into Captivity for their Good.*

2. Who knows, or can ſay, that, that is Evil for man in this Life, that may be conſiſtent with Happineſſe. An Afflicted Man may yet in this Life be a happy Man. As Man, at his beſt Eſtate, is but Vanity; ſo there are, that in their worſt Eſtate may be Happy. A Man may be Great, and Rich, and yet Miſerable: And, a Man may be Poor, and Afflicted, and yet Happy. *Job* 5. 17. *Behold, Happy is the Man whom God Correcteth.* It ſeems to be a ſtrange thing, and therefore a *BEHOLD* is put to it. A ſtrange Sight, to ſee an Afflicted Man, and yet a Bleſſed Man! Senſe and Reaſon wonder at this Conjunction, That Affliction and Happineſſe ſhould both Kiſſe the ſame Perſon. *Pſal.* 94. 12. *Bleſſed is the Man whom thou Chaſtneſt, &c.* So that a Man may be a Chaſtiſed man, and yet a Bleſſed man.

3. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That thoſe things

are evil for a man in this life, that, by experience, have been found, to have been the means of doing many good. Though Afflictions of themſelves have not done it, yet, being Sanctified, and Inſtruction going together with them, they have wrought a Gracious and wonderful Change. How many may ſay with *David*, *That it was good for them, that they were Afflicted.* We read, of *Moſes* his Rod, what Miracles it wrought. The Rod of Affliction works Miracles, when God worketh with it. How many Proud ones, hath Affliction Humbled? When *Manaſſeh* was in Bryers, then he ſought God. How many Ignorant ones, hath Affliction taught? They have Learnt that, in the School of Affliction, that they never knew before. Sir *Thomas Palmer*, upon *Tower-Hill*, when he came to Dye, (pointing to the *Tower*) ſaid, I have learnt more, in yonder dark Corner of the *Tower*, then ever I learnt in all may Life. How many wild, and unruly Spirits, hath Affliction tamed? Thoſe, that in their Proſperity, have been, as Wild Aſſes, uſed to the Wilderneſs, that none could turn them back: Yet in their Moneth of Affliction, they have been found and taken. *Jer.* 31. 18. *Ephraim* ſaith, *Thou haſt Chaſtiſed me, and I was Chaſtiſed.* (i. e.) I was bettered by the Chaſtiſment. He was, as an unruly Bullock, unaccuſtomed to the Yoak. But Afflictions have made him to ſubmit, and tamed him. How many Wandring ones, hath Affliction Reduced and brought into the Way? *Pſal.* 119. 67. *Before I was Afflicted, I went aſtray: but now I keep thy Statutes.* Many have been out of the Way to Heaven, and have been brought into it, by Gods Guiding with this Rod. It was Affliction, that

made

made the Prodigal find the way to his Father's houſe. We read of thoſe that were with *Paul* in the Ship, when they ſuffered Ship-Wrack, *Acts* 27. 44. that ſome upon Planks, and ſome upon the broken pieces of the Ship, got ſafe to Land. So, many have been brought to Heaven, upon the broken pieces of an Eſtate; and muſt ſay, (as one, once ſaid) *They had been undone, if they had not been undone.* How many worldlings, hath Afflictions Weaned from the world? By being croſt in the creature, they have come to diſcern the Vanity that is in the creature, and to have their hearts taken off the creature. Here we taſt Affliction, (as a Father ſaith) *Tanquam amaritudinem in ubere materno.* We are apt to hang on the breaſts of the Creature, and Afflictions are the Wormwood, by which God Weans us from them.

Laſtly, How many Sinners, hath Affliction ſtopped, who elſe, had run headlong into Hell; if God had not made a Hedg of Affliction in their way? We read, *Hoſ.* 2. 6. *I will* (ſaith the Lord) *hedg up thy way with Thorns, and thou ſhalt not find thy paths.* God ſometimes, maketh a hedg of Thorns, whereby ſinners are ſtopped; It is happy for a man to meet with ſuch a ſtop, though the hedg be made of Thorns.

4. Who knoweth, or can ſay, That, that Condition is Evil for a man in this life, in which the People of God are beſt. This is to be conſidered, that wicked men, are worſt, in their beſt worldly condition; and a Godly Man, is beſt, when his outward condition, is worſt. As one ſaith of the Engliſh Nation.

Anglica gens eſt optima flens & peſſima ridens.

The Engliſh Nation, is beſt when it Weeps, and worſt when it Laughs.

Thus for the Second ſort, of thoſe that are miſtaken about Conditions.

3. There are another ſort, that are groſly miſtaken on the other hand; And ſuch are thoſe, who think it cannot but be well with them, becauſe they are in this life Afflicted. Thus ſome think, they are the better, and the happier, upon that account. And here lyeth the miſtake, becauſe they hear, Afflictions have done ſome good; and that ſome, have been able to ſay, That it was good for them, that they were Afflicted; and thence Conclude, That they are happy, becauſe their Condition, is ſuch a Condition: Never conſidering, (what I ſaid before,) That Afflictions of themſelves, never did any man good; and that conditions are to us, as we are in thoſe conditions. Some, becauſe they Suffer in this world, think it is an Argument, that they ſhall be freed from Suffering in another world; as if God could not make two Hells for them. We muſt know, when the Scripture ſpeaketh of Rejoycing in Affliction, it is not to be underſtood, that meerly Afflictions are matter of Joy. Thoſe that think, they are happy becauſe they are Afflicted, and that their Condition is low in this world, may be ſadly miſtaken. It is ſaid, *Mat.* 5. 3. *Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit*, &c. It is not ſaid, Bleſſed are all that are poor in Purſe.

Let

Let me tell you, Some mens ſufferings here, are but the forerunners of thoſe that are to come, and ſo may be but the beginning of ſorowes. We muſt know, that upon the very Tooth-ach of a Reprobate, (as one ſaith) Hell is Engraven. Every *Lazarus*, is not taken into *Abrahams* boſome. Thoſe may want a bit of bread here, that may hereafter, cry as *Dives* did, for a drop of water, to cool their tongues. A man may be poor in this world, and poor in the world to come. There are a ſort of poor, that are the worſt of people under Heaven, being Ignorant, Stubborn, Prophane, Vitious, Deſpiſers of God, His Sabbaths, Ordinances, Miniſters, People. And indeed, for the moſt part, the pooreſt ſort, are the worſt of people, and the moſt Licentious; there being nothing of knowledg, or politique Reſtraints, or civil and ingenious Education, to keep them in, and hold them back. To conclude this, Happineſs is not the portion of every Afflicted man in this life. It is not Affliction, but Affliction Sanctified, that makes a man Happy by it.

Thus for the Firſt Information.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Second Information.

IF no man knoweth, What is good for a man in this Life, then it Informeth us, That we ſhould be as ready to receive evil, as well as good, at the Hands of God. We are not to be our own Carvers in reſpect of Conditions. When *Job* was in his ſad Condition, the Devil ſtirred up his Wife, to tempt him to Blaſphemy, and Impatiency. But ſee what anſwer *Job* returns to her, *Job* 2. 10. *Thou ſpeakeſt as one of the fooliſh Women, &c.* Where Firſt, He Reprehends her. Secondly, He Inſtructeth Her. *Shall we*, ſaith he, *receive Good at the Hands of God, and not receive Evil*; *(q. d.)* Have I, for ſo many Years, received ſo many good things, and bleſſings, from the Hand of God; and ſhall I not now, receive theſe Croſſes and Afflictions? Now, receiving Evil from the Hand of God, ſtands in this, In a Sweet, and Patient Submiſſion, to the Will and Diſpenſation of God; being content, with what God ſendeth, whether it be good or evil, and that upon theſe Conſiderations.

1. That God knoweth, what is better for us in this life, then we do; ſince no Man knoweth, what is good for man in this life.

2. That Good and Evil, come both, from one and the ſame God. It is the Lord that gives, and that takes away. As we have Bleſſings, by Divine Dona-

Donation, ſo Afflictions, by Divine Ordination. It is God, that bringeth not only Men, and their Comforts, but alſo Men, and their Croſſes, together.

3. As Good and Evil, come from the ſame God, ſo they may come from the ſame Affection in God; They may both come from Love. The Apoſtle *James*, puts this Queſtion, *Can a Fountain ſend forth ſweet water and bitter?* Jam. 3. 11. Yet from the ſame Fountain of Divine Love, may iſſue the ſweet Waters of Comfort, and the bitter Waters of Afflictions. The ſame Love, that moves a Father, to beſtow an Inheritance on his Child, moves him alſo, to Correct his Child.

4. All Evils, come from a God, that hath a Soveraign Power over us, and may do with us, what he pleaſeth. A God that may give, and take away; and who can ſay to Him, *What doeſt Thou?* A God that hath Right to all that we have, and ſo may take away what he pleaſe. In taking away, he takes away, but what is His own. It is obſervable in Scripture, That the Lord claimeth an Intereſt, in all that belongs to Man, *(viz.) The Earth, and the Fulneſs thereof*; and ſo, whatſoever it affordeth to man, Whether Fields, full of Corn; or Foulds, full of Sheep; or Orchards, full of Fruit; or Stables, full of Meat. The very Cattel, and the Beaſts of the Earth, are the Lords, *Pſal.* 50. 10. *All the Beaſts of the Forreſt are mine.* The Beaſts of the Forreſt, are of a wild nature, and commonly know no Maſter; and yet of theſe, The Lord ſaith, they are His: So alſo, He ſaith of Gold, and Silver, *Hag.* 2. 8. *Thy Gold and Silver, is mine.* Yea, *the Wool, and the Flax we have. Hoſ.* 2. 8. He ſaith,

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It is His. So that God, in taking away any thing from us, takes away but what is His own.

5. All Evils, come from the Hand of a Powerful God, with whom there is no Contending. When a great Philoſopher was chekt, for yielding in a Diſcourſe he had with *Adrian* the Emperour, he gave this Anſwer, Should I not yield to him, that hath Thirty Legions at command? There is no Conteſting with Soveraignty, no Reſiſting Omnipotency, no Striving with our Maker. The Earthen Pitcher, by ſtriking againſt a Rock, doth but daſh it ſelf to pieces.

6. All Evils, come from a Righteous God, that can do His creature no wrong, *Gen.* 18 25. *Shall not the Judg of all the Earth do Right?* Rom. 3. 5. *Is God Unrighteous,* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that taketh Vengeance?* And he anſwereth it, with a *God forbid.* So we may ſay, Is God Unrighteous, that ſendeth Affliction? *God forbid,* Deut. 32. 4. *All His wayes are Judgment.*

7. All Evils come from that God, that can bring Good out of Evil, and Light out of Darkneſs; that can turn Water into Wine, and make us Spiritual Gainers, by Temporal Afflictions. He ſometimes pulls down, to build up better; and ſometimes takes away, when He intends a greater Good.

Thus for the Uſe of Information.

We now come to the Reſolution of this great Queſtion, Whether the knowledg, of what is good for a man in this life, be ſo hidden from man, that it may not in ſome meaſure be attained to; And if ſo, What Directions are there, for the attaining of this Knowledg? *Anſw.*

Anſw. Though the full and perfect Knowledg of *what is good for a man in this Life*, be ſo hidden, That a Man cannot make a Judgement of others conditions, yet we grant that he may make a judgement of his own Condition. And here I ſhall give in, ſome Directions to help Men, in making a Judgement of their own Condition.

1. General.
2. Particular.

I. General Directions.

1. Something is to be Known.
2. Something is to be Done.

I. Something is to be Known, before we can make a right Judgement of our Condition. So the things to be Known, are theſe:

1. Who is the Framer of our Conditions; Who it is Ordains and Appoints them, and puts us into them? It is not, as the Heathen thought, *Quiſque fortunæ ſuæ faber*, That every Man is the Framer of his own Fortune; and ſo of his own Condition. Conditions are Divine Allotments. *Miſery* (ſaith *Job*) *ſprings not out of the Duſt.* And the Pſalmiſt tells us, *That Promotion comes neither from the Eaſt, nor from the Weſt; but God is the Judge:* i. e. He is the great Orderer, and Diſpoſer of Conditions: He puteth down One, and ſetteth up Another. It comes not from the Eaſt or Weſt; It comes not from Earth, nor from Man; but it is God, that brings a Man, and his Condition together, and that Frames it for him.

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And it is impoſſible, that ever any Man ſhould make a true Judgement of his Condition, That doth not firſt Know, who is the Framer of it.

2. We muſt know the right way of making a Judgement of Conditions. Except we know that, it is impoſſible, but we muſt be Miſtaken. And, I ſhall give you ſome Particulars concerning that:

1. In Judging of Conditions, Take heed of being over-Haſty. Haſty, and Raſh Judgment, is ſeldom Right. We are to Weigh, and Conſider well of a Condition, before we make a Judgement of it. A Condition, at the firſt Bluſh, may ſeem otherwayes then it is. The Good, and ſo the Evil, of a Condition, doth not appear preſently; It may lie at the Bottom of it. The good of Affliction doth not appear preſently: but the Apoſtle, ſaith, *Heb.* 12.11. *It yeildeth the quiet fruit of Righteouſneſſe, τοῖς γεγυμνασμένοις, to them that are exerciſed thereby.* So, that we muſt be Exerciſed in a Condition, before we can make a Judgement of a Condition. And the Apoſtle, in that Chapter, telleth us, That an Afflicted condition, at the firſt ſight, ſeems *grievous*, and not *joyous*: but, *afterwards* (ſaith he) *it brings forth the quiet fruit of Righteouſneſs*. This was the Errour of *Job*'s Friends; they were too haſty in making a Judgement of his Condition: and ſo, it is no wonder they were ſo Miſtaken about it.

2. In making a Judgement of Conditions, you muſt not judge of the Perſon by the Condition, but of the Condition by the Per-

Perſon. Some there be, that judge of Perſons, by the Conditions; As the *Barbarians* did of *Paul*, when they ſaw a Viper hanging on his Hand; *Surely, this Man is a Murderer, &c.* Thus, ſome judge of Perſons, to be Good, or Evil, according as their Conditions are. So, they judge thoſe to be Good, whoſe condition is Proſperous; as thoſe in *Malachi, Mal.* 3.15. called *the proud Happy.* And, ſo they look upon thoſe as Wicked, who are in an Afflicted condition. Thus, *Job*'s Friends did judge of him, by his Condition. Now, the right way of making a Judgement of Conditions, is, To Judge of Conditions by Perſons. To a Wicked man, every condition is Evil: And, to a Godly man, every condition is Good. That, as the Expreſſion is, *Tit.* 1.15. *To the Pure, all things are Pure:* So, to thoſe that are Good, all things are Good. If he hath Proſperity, it cauſeth Thankfulneſs; if Adverſity, it worketh Patience. *Rom.* 8. 28. *All things work together for Good, to them that Love God.* So that we muſt know, we are to judge of Conditions, by the Perſons. When one came to *Auſtin*, and told him of one that came to a ſtrange End, he preſently asked, *But, how did he Live?* Intimating, That, a man was not to be judged of, by the manner of his Death, if he were Godly in his Life.

3. In making of a Judgement of Conditions, you muſt judge of them, by what Men are to, and in, their Conditions. I have

have told you before, A condition is to a Man, as he is to, and in, his condition. It is, as a Man mannageth his condition. Would you know, whether Proſperity be Good for a Man? You muſt ſee how he doth manage that condition; and how he doth carry, and deport himſelf in it. If he demean himſelf Proudly, and make the Things he enjoyes, to be Fuel for his Luſt; you may conclude, his condition is Evil for him. So, on the contrary; Would you know, Whether an Afflicted condition be Evil for a Man? Mark how he Behaves himſelf in that condition; If Fooliſhly, if Impatiently; Either on the one hand, Deſpiſing the Affliction; Or, on the other hand, Murmuring at it: You may know, that it is Evil for him. Of this, I ſhall ſpeak more afterwards.

4. To make a Judgement of Conditions, We muſt Know our Spirits, and Diſpoſitions. Now, we cannot know the Spirits, and Diſpoſitions of others; but we ſhould labour to know our own, which we may know; and thereby come to know *what is good for us in this Life.* Some there are, That will undertake to make a Judgement of a condition, without ever eying, or conſidering their own Diſpoſition. It is with ſome Men, as it is with ſome that ſit at the Wine: when they have drunk ſo many Cups, yet they call for the other Quart, and the other Pint, when they have Drunk too much already; not conſidering what their

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heads will bear. Conſider, as all heads, ſo all diſpoſitions are not alike. This *Agur* acknowledged in that prayer of his, *Prov.* 30. 8. *Give me not Riches.* He looked upon them, as a heady and intoxicating Drink, which was too Strong for him. The Prophet ſpeaks of ſome, that are ſtrong to drink Wine. Now a man of a weak Brain, that will make their meaſure his, is eaſily overtaken. We are apt to eye the proſperous condition of another, and to think ſuch a condition is good for us; and to deſire, to have our condition made after that Faſhion and Mode. But this is, as if the younger child ſhould cry, to have the coat of his elder brother, which would be too long for him, and ready continually to make him fall.

5. In making a Judgment of a condition, we muſt judg of it, by the relation it hath to another condition, *viz.* that which is Spiritual and Eternal. The ſaying is, that what is the firſt, and beſt, in every thing, is the Rule of the reſt: So the beſt condition, muſt direct us, how to judg of lower conditions. That condition is good for a man, that makes his Spiritual Condition the better: This is the fault of many, they judg of conditions, without conſidering how they ſtand in conjunction with, or oppoſition to, their Spiritual and Eternal Condition. We may ſafely conclude, that that Condition is good for a man in this Life, that is an advantage to him, in re-

lation to another Life. Many, little conſider this. We ſhould put the queſtion to our ſelves, in every condition, Am I the better for being in this Condition, in relation to the Spiritual and Eternal Good of my Soul? Doth it hinder, or further my growth in Grace? Doth it hinder, or further my Salvation? Doth it ſet me, nearer Heaven, or nearer Hell?

6. In making a Judgment of Conditions, we muſt make uſe of Faith, and not Judg, by Senſe and Opinion, not by Appearances; Thoſe that Judg ſo, will never make a Right Judgment of Conditions. An Eye of Faith will ſee Good, in that wherin an Eye of Senſe, yea of Reaſon too, can ſee none, *Heb.* 11. 26. It is ſaid, By Faith, *Moſes* refuſed to be called the Son of *Pharoahs* Daughter, &c. Where ſee, what he refuſed (*viz.*) to be called, the Son of *Pharoahs* Daughter; which ſeemingly, was the greateſt Honour and Advancement, that a man could attain unto; And then ſee what he choſe, (*viz.*) to Suffer Affliction with the People of God. One would have thought, he had choſe the Evil, and refuſed the Good. But by an Eye of Faith, he ſaw Evil in that, that Senſe and Reaſon would have told him was good; and Good in that, that they would have told him was Evil. It is obſervable, in *Mat.* 5. that all the Beatitudes are affixed, to unlikely conditions: *Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit. Bleſſed are thoſe that are Perſecuted for Righteouſneſs Sake.*

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Bleſſed are ye, when men Revile, and Perſecute you, and ſpeak all manner of evil againſt you, falſly for my Names ſake. This is to ſhew, that the Judgment of the Word, and the Judgment of the world, are contrary. Faith will ſhew you, that the men of the world, are *infæliciter fælices* miſerable in being happy. And the Children of God, are *fæliciter infælices*, happy in their being miſerable. So that, as the Apoſtle ſaith, *Without Faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*: So, without Faith, it is impoſſible to make a judgment of conditions. I ſhall cloſe this, with an Anſwer, given to one, that paſſed his cenſure upon a picture, as ill drawn, when it was not ſo; *Si meos oculos haberes, non ita diceres*, If thou hadſt mine eyes, thou wouldſt not ſay ſo. Faith teacheth a man, to make another Judgment of Conditions, then Senſe or Reaſon doth.

III. Thoſe that will make a judgment of a condition, muſt know another thing, (*viz.*) What it is makes a condition good, and what makes a condition evil for a man in this life. I ſhall in ſome particulars ſhew, What it is, that makes a mans condition good for him in this life.

1. An Intereſt in the Covenant. Where there is that Intereſt, there is an aſſurance that all is good, and all is for good. When we once come to know our Intereſt in the Covenant, we may then make a judgment of a condition. I ſhewed you before; we are not to judg of perſons, by their conditions, but of conditions, by the perſons, *Pſal.* 25. 10. *All the wayes of the Lord, are Mercy and*

Truth, to them that keep his Covenant. So it is to them that have an Intereſt in the Covenant. All conditions fall under a Promiſe, when the Scripture ſaith, *All ſhall work together for good.* An Afflicted condition it ſelf, falleth under that promiſe. So when it is ſaid, *No good thing, will He with-hold from them, that walk uprightly.* Afflictions themſelves, come under that promiſe. If Afflictions be good for them, they ſhall have them; and if they have them, they may be aſſured they are good for them. It is the Covenant, and Promiſe, that helpeth us, to make a right Interpretation of all conditions, and of all the Dealings of God with us in this life.

2. That which makes a condition good for a man in this life, is the Enjoyment of God in a Condition; and ſo we may conclude, that that condition is good for a man in this life, in which he enjoys God. The beſt condition, without God in it, is evil; and the worſt condition, in which we enjoy God, is good. God is the chiefeſt Good, and that condition muſt needs be good, in which we enjoy the chiefeſt Good. Look upon the worſt of outward conditions, it is the beſt, if there be an enjoyment of God the more in it. This was the ground of *Moſes* choice, *Heb.* 11. 26. that he chooſe rather, the ſuffering of Affliction with the People of God, then the enjoyment of all *the Pleaſures and Treaſures of Egypt.* He ſaw, God was to be Enjoyed in that Condition. So that by this, we may make a judgment of conditions: That condition is good for a man in this life, in which he enjoys the chiefeſt Good. The Apoſtle ſaith, 2 *Cor.* 1. 5. *As our Tribulations abound for Chriſt, ſo*

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our Conſolations abound through Chriſt. When one ſeeth Chriſtians abound in Tribulations, he would think their condition evil; but when he cometh to ſee their Conſolations abound in that condition, he muſt needs conclude it good. To cloſe up this, There is no condition good, without the enjoyment of the Chiefeſt Good. He that enjoys God in a condition, enjoys Him, whoſe Favour is Life, and whoſe Countenance is a Sun, to enlighten the darkeſt condition. It is the Sun, that makes day, let the Starrs be never ſo many, and ſhine never ſo bright, yet it is night ſtill. So it is in reſpect of conditions, let a man enjoy never ſo much of the creature, yet without the enjoyment of God, it is but a dark condition. It is His Countenance, that makes the darkneſs of a condition, to be light about us, *Pſal.* 18. 28. *He ſhall make my darkneſs, to be light.* Mic. 7. 7. *Though I ſit in darkneſs, the Lord ſhall be a light about me.* So that that condition is good for a man in this life, that God enlightneth, and ſhineth upon, with the beams of His Countenance.

3. That that ſpeaks a mans condition Good for him in this Life, is, The ſuitableneſs of his Spirit to his condition. When the Spirit is not above the condition. As it is to be obſerved in a Married condition; the ſweetneſs of the condition lieth in this, In the Suitableneſs of their Spirits. So, in every condition, the ſweetneſs, and goodneſs of it, lieth in the Suitableneſs that is between our Spirits, and our Condition. We ſee how it is with ſome, That their ſpirits are above their condition; their ſpirits are High, when their condition is Low; and upon this, their condition doth not

pleaſe

pleaſe them. And this is the cauſe of much Diſcontent, becauſe their ſpirits ſuit not with their condition. This is the great thing we are to look to; In making a judgement of conditions, to ſearch, and find out, How our ſpirits ſuit with our condition. Whether we can ſay, as the Apoſtle doth, *Phil.* 4. 11. *I have learnt, in every eſtate to be Content.* He had a ſpirit fitted for every condition. So then, when your ſpirits and conditions ſuit, it is one thing, by which you are to make a judgement of your condition.

4. That which makes a condition Good for a man in this Life, is, *Peace within.* What ever the condition be Without, if there be peace Within, it makes it good and ſweet to him. Want of that imbitters a condition. *Solomon* ſaith, *A good Conſcience is a continual Feaſt.* It Feaſts a man, and makes him Merry in all conditions; and ſo makes the worſt Outward eſtate and condition to be good and ſweet to him. *Iſa.*48.22. *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked.* Put him into what condition you will, he hath no Peace in that condition; and that ſpoils all.

5. That, that makes a condition good for a man in this Life, is, Doing the Work of his condition. Conditions have their ſeveral, and ſuitable Improvements. In every condition, a man ſhould put ſuch a Queſtion to himſelf, as the Prophet puts, *Mich.* 6. 8. *And now, What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?* So, in every condition we ſhould put this Queſtion to our ſelves; What is it that the Lord requires me do, as the work of my condition? The Apoſtle *James* tells us of Duties ſuitable to conditions, *Jam.* 5. 13. *If any man be Afflicted,*

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let him Pray; If any man be Merry, let him ſing Pſalmes. An Afflicted condition hath its Duties, and a Proſperous condition hath it's: And by doing the Work, and performing the Duties of a condition, we make a Judgement of it, Whether it be good for us in this Life.

6. That, that makes a condition good for a man in this Life, is, His living above his outward condition. When, though there be a ſuitableneſs of ſpirit to the condition, yet he takes not up with his condition, but fetcheth in his Contentment from ſome higher thing. What is it, that makes a Proſperous condition Evil to ſome? Surely this, they look no further than their condition; They look no higher than Riches and Honour, &c. and ſeek for all their comfort, and contentment from them. And likewiſe, What is it that makes an Afflicted condition Evil to ſome? Surely this, they have their Eye only upon their Condition; they look no higher than their Troubles, and Croſſes, and Afflictions. They ſee nothing beyond their condition; as *Hagar*, when ſhe was wandering in the Wilderneſs, and the Water in her Bottle was ſpent, ſhe concludes, that She, and her Child, muſt Die: as though the Bottle was all that ſhe, and her Child, had to live upon; when yet, there was a Fountain near, but ſhe could not ſee it. Let a mans condition be what it will, yet it cannot hurt him, if he live Above it. Proſperity cannot hurt that man, who maketh God his All, in a condition. There is an Expreſſion, *Job* 20. 22. concerning a Wicked man; That *in the midſt of his Sufficiency he ſhall be in Straits.* Thus it is with ſome men, Let their condition be what it will, yet

in the midſt of it they are in Straits: the Reaſon is, Becauſe they live no Higher than their condition. In the midſt of their Proſperity, and Sufficiency, they are in ſtraits, by reaſon of their many Cares, and Fears, and perplexing Thoughts, and unſatisfied Deſires; and if ſo in Proſperity, much more in Adverſity. Now, a man that lives upon that, that is Higher than his Condition, hath ſuch ſweet In-comes of Joy, and Peace, and Comfort, and Contentment in every Condition, that he is never in any Straits. Hence it is, the Apoſtle telleth us, 1 *Tim.* 6. 6. *Godlineſs, with Contentment, is great Gain:* Or, it may be read thus, *Godlineſs is great Gain, with Contentment*; i.e. It bringeth Gain with Contentment. Now, what is Godlineſs? It is an Heavenly impreſſion, and propenſion in the heart and ſoul of a Man, whereby it is, in all conditions, carried towards God. Now, what ever a mans condition be, Godlineſs will make it Gainful, and that with Contentment. Our Saviour told his Diſciples, when they urged Him to Eate, *John* 4. *I have meat to eate, that ye know not of.* So it is with ſuch a man, that lives upon God, and Chriſt, he hath, in every condition, that comfort, & contentment, that the World knows not of. Thus the Apoſtle *Paul* lived above his condition, 2 *Cor.* 6. 10. *As Sorrowful, yet always Rejoycing; As having Nothing, yet poſſeſſing All things.* q. d. Men look upon us, as thoſe that are in a ſad condition, being Poor, and having Nothing; but we live upon ſomething that is above our condition. So that every condition is good to him, that hath ſomething to live upon above his condition. That, as it is in reſpect of Ordinances, ſo it is in reſpect of Conditions.

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We are, in the Uſe of Ordinances, to live above them, and to ſeek to find God in them: So in conditions, we are to live above them, and to ſeek to God, for that comfort and contentment that ſweeteneth a condition. Before I leave this, I muſt tell you, there is a two-fold living above ones condition.

1. *Sinful:* Ariſing from Haughtineſs of Spirit.
2. *Holy:* Proceeding from Heavenlineſs of Spirit.

1. *Sinful:* When a mans Heart, and Spirit, is not contented with its preſent Condition; when his ſpirit is above his condition, and he thinks his condition too low, and mean for him. This is Sinful.

2. *Holy:* When a man hath ſuch a Heavenly Spirit, that cauſeth him, not to take up with the things of his Outward condition; but lives upon Higher things. And this ſtands in Two things.

1. Living above the Comforts of a Condition.
2. Above the Croſſes of a Condition.

1. Living above the Comforts of a Condition. It is thus with a gracious heart: when the outward condition is comfortable, yet he liveth upon ſomething above the comforts of his condition. It is the Apoſtles Counſel, 1 *Cor.* 7. 29. *&c. Let thoſe that have Wives, be as though they had none, and thoſe that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not.* He liveth upon higher things, than the comforts of a Wife. So that it is, as if he ſhould have ſaid; The comfort in a Wife, was nothing, in reſpect of the comfort he finds in God, and Chriſt. And ſo he ſeeth, that in his condition, there is nothing to rejoyce in, in compariſon of higher things. As Chriſt ſaid to his

his Disciples, *Rejoyce not in this, That the Devils are subject to you; But rather rejoyce in this, That your Names are written in Heaven.*

2. Living above the Crosses of a Condition: The Apostle saith, 1 *Cor.* 1. 29. *Let them that weep, be as though they wept not.* To shew, that Christians, should live above the Crosses of their Condition, enjoying that that makes them weep, as if they wept not,

7. That, that makes a condition Good for a man in this Life, is, Watchfulness against the Temptations that attend a Condition. There must be standing upon our guard in Conditions, and watching against Temptations. Conditions (as I have shewed you formerly) are attended with Temptations. There are Temptations, that attend a Prosperous, and an Afflicted condition. Sathan layeth snares for us in every Condition; but cannot hurt us, if we but once know his Devices. He is subtle, and loves to Fish in all Waters; and so he layeth Snares in all conditions. This then speaks a condition Good, when we Watch against the Temptations of a Condition. The Apostle writing to *Timothy*, a young man, 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. biddeth him *flie the lusts of Youth.* Youth hath its Lusts, and Conditions have their Temptations, which we ought to Watch against. A Prosperous condition hath its Temptations, and an Afflicted condition hath its Temptations. The Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. bids him, *Charge them that are Rich in this World, that they be not High-minded; and that they trust not in uncertain Riches:* Which shews the Temptations that attend that Condition, *viz.* High-mindedness, and trusting in Riches.

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An Afflicted condition hath its Temptations too, *Heb.* 12. 5. Where, writing to them that were in an Afflicted condition, he exhorteth them to avoid two Extreams, in *ver.* 5. *My Son, Deſpiſe not the Chaſtning of the Lord; neither faint, when thou art Rebuked of him.* In an Afflicted condition, we are apt, either to Deſpiſe the Affliction, or to be too much dejected and caſt down under the Affliction: And therefore, *ver.* 12. he bids them *lift up the hands that hang down.* So *James* 5. he ſpeaks to Afflicted ones to be Patient, and ſtabliſh their Hearts. And *ver.* 9. ſaith, *Grudge not one againſt another, Brethren.* The word is μὴ στενάζετε, *Groan not one againſt another.* In it, there is an Exhortation to them, to watch againſt the Temptations that attend an Afflicted condition. Some think, the Apoſtle there forbids Murmuring Groans, which ariſe from our being diſcontented at Providences: This is one Temptation. Some think, they are Vindictive Groans, proceeding from Revenge, and Stomack againſt thoſe that were the Inſtruments of our Affliction: This is another Temptation. Some think, are meant Envious Groans, proceeding from their Envying at thoſe, that ſuffered leſſe than they did: This is another Temptation. Thus we ſee, That all Conditions have their Temptations. And this is that, that ſpeaks a condition Good for a man; when, in his Condition, he is watchful againſt the Temptations of it; avoiding the Snares of it. Satan obſerveth wind and tide in his Temptations; he obſerveth the wind and tide of a Condition. He obſerveth, whether the wind that bloweth, be a warm Southerly wind of Proſperity, or a cold Northerly wind

wind of Adverſity; and accordingly he ſuits his Temptations. It is the Condition that makes the Temptation in ſeaſon. He ſeldom tempts a poor man to pride: And therefore it is made, by *Solomon*, a prodigious ſight, *Eccleſ.* 10.7. to ſee *Servants on Horſe-back*. So he ſeldom tempts Rich men to Steal; the reaſon, is, Becauſe ſuch Temptations are unſuitable to their Condition.

CHAP. IX.

8. THat that makes a condition Good for a man in this Life, is, Spiritualizing a Condition; when there is an extracting ſomething that is Spiritually good out of our outward, and temporal Conditions. Alchymiſts tell us, There is an Art, of turning baſer Mettals into Gold: So there is a Heavenly Art, of Spiritualizing temporal Conditions, and turning them into Heavenly Advantages. The Gracious man is the true Alchymiſt, that can extract ſomething that is Spiritual, out of that which is Temporal; and what concerns another Life, out of the things of this Life. We muſt know, there is an Art of Byaſſing conditions. A Bowl runneth according as you ſet the Byaſs; ſo conditions are according to the Byaſs you put upon them. When a condition is Spiritually Byaſſed, it moves a man Heaven-ward: Conſider how it is with Saylers; though they have a Side-wind, yea, a Wind that ſeems to blow againſt them; yet they have an Art of ſetting their

their Sails ſo, that they will make an advantage of thoſe Winds. So Grace, will teach every Man, ſo to manage his Condition, that, let the Wind of it blow from what place, or quarter it will, yet it ſhall be Advantagious to him, for the carrying him on, towards his defired Haven, which is Heaven. We muſt know; Outward conditions are common to Good and Bad. But here lieth the difference; The Godly man, from a Heavenly Principle, makes a Spiritual Advantage of his condition, when another doth not. Some, when they are in Proſperity, or Adverſity, (being Carnal) underſtand not the Art of making a Spiritual Advantage of a Condition.

We know, there areſome actions that are common to Men, and Beaſts; As to Eat, Drink, and Move, &c. The Beaſt doth it, and Man doth it. Now where is the difference? In this, when Man doth them, they are Reaſonable Actions, they are guided with Reaſon, and moderated by Reaſon; but when a beaſt doth them, they are the actions of a beaſt, and ſo they are but brutiſh. So it is in reſpect of conditions, they are common to good, and bad; but here lyeth the difference. A Godly man, being indued with a Principle of Spiritual Wiſdom, makes a Spiritual Advantage of his condition, be it what it will; when the other, haveing no ſuch principle, knoweth not how to do it. It is with Godly Men, in their worldly conditions, as it is with the Planets, which have a motion of their own, contrary to that Rapt Motion of the Heavens, whereby they are carried, and whirled about, in twenty four hours. So it is with Godly men, in their conditions, they are carryed about

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as the world is, in reſpect of conditions. In reſpect of their outwards, they are in the ſame condition with others, ſometimes Rich, ſometimes Poor, ſometimes High, ſometimes Low, ſometimes in Proſperity, and ſometimes in Adverſity: But in theſe conditions, they have a different motion from others; being directed by Grace, and the Spirit of God, they move Heaven-wards. Even in thoſe conditions, that ſeem to carry them downwards, they have a motion upwards. We know in Scripture, Proſperity is called a Mountain; and Afflictions are compared to, and called Waters. As for Proſperity, which is called a Mountain, Grace teacheth a man, to get on the top of it, from whence he may ſee Heaven the better, as *Moſes* did the Land of *Canaan*, from the top of Mount *Piſgah*. Some there are, when their Mountain is made high, they ſet it between them and Heaven. And alas! what can a man ſee, when he is at the bottom, and foot of a Mountain? When a man, is on the top of a Mountain, then the Face of the Heavens, lyeth open to his View. Then a man may conclude, A proſperous condition is good for him, when it is not a Mountain, to hide Heaven from him, but to raiſe him up, more towards Heaven. So for an Afflicted Condition: Afflictions, are in Scripture, compared to Waters. Thus it is with ſome, when they come into theſe waters, they ſink, and are over-whelmed. Theſe waters run over them, and drown them. But with a Godly Man, it is otherwiſe; he ſwims upon theſe waters, and is like *Noahs* Ark in the Deluge, the higher the waters were, the more it was lifted up, towards Heaven: So the riſing of theſe waters of Affliction,

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do but lift a Godly man up, nearer to Heaven. So then, if a man would make a judgment of conditions, he must see, whether they are Spiritually good for him, by what Spiritual Extraction he maketh out of them, and what Spiritual Advantage he makes of them.

9. That that makes a condition good for a man in this life, is, An holy indifferency of Spirit, in respect of conditions. When it is indifferent to him, what condition he is put into, submitting to the Will of God, and resolving, Gods Will, shall be his. Then is a condition good for a man, when his Spirit is brought to this indifferency. In respect of Salvation, he is Absolute; but in respect of outward conditions, whether to be high or low, he is indifferent, and saith, *Let it be as the Lord will.* When there is this submission to God in a condition, then it is good. Some there are, that have indeed, an indifferency of Spirit, in relation to Spiritual, and Eternal Good Things; but none, in relation to those good things that are Temporal. They are indifferent, whether they have Grace, or not, &c. But concerning the things of this life, it is with them, as with *Rachel* concerning children, They must have them, or else they dye. Then it is right, when there is an indifferency of Spirit, in respect of outward things. When our hearts are not set, on this or that, worldly thing; but we are indifferent, whether we have it or not. If God will give them the things of this life, such Spirits will be thankful; if God deny them, to them, such Spirits will be content. Such a Spirit had the Apostle, *Phil.* 4. 11, 12. *Not that I speak* (saith he) *in respect of want, for I know both how*

how to be abaſed, and how to abound, &c. And telleth us withal, *that he had learned, in every condition, therewith to be content.* (q. d.) As for theſe outward things, it is indifferent to me, whether I have them, or have them not; I will not be my own Carver, but am content, with whatſoever condition God ſhall put me into. A Gracious Spirit, is indifferent about all things, ſave-only thoſe, that concern the good of his Soul. As that Martyr, Mr. *Bradford*, anſwered, when one asked him at parting, What he would have to the Queen, No more but this, ſaid he, Tell Her Majeſty, If ſhe will give me my Life, I will thank Her; if ſhe condemn me to Perpetual Impriſonment, I will thank her; If ſhe will Baniſh me, I will thank Her, If ſhe will Burn me, I will thank Her. Herein the indifferency of his Spirit appeared; that, let the Queen deal with him, how She pleaſed, it would pleaſe him, and he ſhould therewith be content. Thus it is with a Gracious Spirit; It is content to be in what condition God ſeeth beſt for him. And this indifferency ariſeth from the Conſideration of theſe things:

1. From the conſideration of Outward conditions, and the Things of them, that they can neither make a Man truly Happy, nor truly Miſerable. Riches, and Honour, and ſuch things, cannot make a man truly Happy. A man may be Rich, and yet a Reprobate. Happineſs lieth in higher Things, and higher Enjoyments. And ſo likewiſe, Troubles, and Croſſes, and Afflictions, cannot make a man truly Miſerable. It is Sin, not Sufferings, that doth that. This *Chryſoſtom* knew, by returning that Anſwer to the Empreſs, who

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Threatned what She would do to him; Tell Her, (ſaid he) *Nil niſi peccatum timeo*, I fear nothing but ſin.

2. From the conſideration of this, That he is not at his own diſpoſing, but at God's, who may do with him, what he will, and put him into what Condition He pleaſeth. He knoweth, he is not to be the Framer of his own Condition, and therefore, leaves it to the Great God, to chooſe and Frame his Condition for him.

3. From the conſideration of this, The changeableneſs of Conditions; He conſiders this, If I ſhould have Proſperity, it may quickly turn to Adverſity, God having ſet the one, over againſt the other. And the conſideration of this changeableneſs, is one thing that helpeth, to put the Spirit upon this indifferency.

4. From the conſideration of this, That he knows not what condition is good for him in this life, and thence concludeth, that that condition muſt needs be beſt for him, that God ſeeth beſt.

5. From the conſideration of this, What relation he hath to the world, that he is but a Pilgrim, and Stranger here, only Travelling through it, towards his Home. And ſo looketh upon conditions here, only as his Inn, in which he is to Lodg. From this conſideration, ariſeth this indifferency of Spirit. He is indifferent concerning his Inn, when he conſidereth, It is not his Home; if he be well accomodated, it pleaſeth him, if not, yet he is contented, conſidering this, I am not to dwell here. Conditions to Gracious Spirits, are as weather is to Travellers, whether it be Fair or Foul, being on his Journy home-wards, he is content.

10. That that makes a condition good for a man in this life, is, A mans behaviour in his condition. Then it is right, when nothing from God, displeaseth us; and nothing from us, displeaseth God. When we are contented, with all the Lords dealings with us; and make it our care in a condition, that our carriage may be such, that it may not displease him. Some there are, that if God put them into a prosperous condition, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them, it pleaseth them well. But then, in that condition, it is not their care to please God; they abuse their Prosperity, to Pride, Luxury, Gluttony, and Drunkenness. As it is said of *Jesurun*, Deut. 32. *He waxed fat, and kicked.* Some there are, that if God put them into an Afflicted condition, are not pleased with what God doth, neither do they please Him, in what they do, in that condition. As those Dispensations of God, are unpleasing to them; so their behaviour, in that condition, is such, that it is most displeasing to God. How many do Fret, and Murmur, and break forth into the indecencies of passion, against God? As that Wicked King of *Israel* said, *This Evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* So consider, Then a condition is good for a man;

1. When nothing that comes from God, displeaseth him, let him put him in what condition he will. Let God set him up, or cast him down; let Him feed him, with pleasant bread, or with the bread and water of Affliction; Let Him set him upon the Throne, or on the Dung-hill; Let Him be a giving God, or a God taking away: Yet he is not displeased with Gods dealings with him. You may remember, what *Eli* said, when the sad

News

News was brought him, concerning what God would do by him and his houſe; his Anſwer was, 1 *Sam.* 3. 18. *It is the Lord, let him do what he will.* Thus did *Hezechiah*, Iſa. 39. 8. Thus did *Job*, when he received the ſad News, concerning the loſſe of his Children and Goods, ſaid he, *The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Bleſſed be the Name of the Lord.*

2. When we diſpleaſe not God in a condition. When we are ſo careful of our behaviour, that we ſay, as *David* did, *Pſal.* 39. 1. *I ſaid, I will take heed to my wayes*, &c. He there, takes up a full reſolution, of not giving liberty to his Tongue, to utter an impatient Word, or Syllable. So then, if we would know, whether the condition we are in, be good for us in this Life; we muſt enquire concerning theſe two things.

I. Whether God's dealings with us, pleaſe us; and our carriage, in our condition, pleaſe Him? The Truth is this, Moſt of us, deſire that God would pleaſe us in our conditions, and give us, what we deſire. As *Sampſon* ſaid of the Woman of *Timnah*, *Give her me, for ſhe pleaſeth me well.* So ſay ſome, Give me this, and that, put me into ſuch a condition, for it pleaſeth me well. But here is the Sin, They have no care to pleaſe God, in their condition. It is with them, as with the people of *Iſrael*, who asked meat, for their luſts. And as thoſe, of whom the Apoſtle *James* ſpeaketh, *They ask, that they may ſpend it upon their luſts.* So that, a condition is then good for us, when nothing from God,

displeaseth us, and nothing from us, displeaseth God in the condition.

II. That that makes a condition good for a man in this life, is, a mans enjoyment of himself in his condition. An holy and comfortable enjoyment of a mans self, in a condition, speaketh his condition good for him. The enjoyment of God, and the enjoyment of our selves, in a condition, makes a condition good for us.

1. Concerning a prosperous condition, How many have lost themselves in that condition; that, as we say of those, whom Wine, or Strong Drink hath overcome, that they are not themselves. Some, are so overcome with their prosperity, that we may say of them, they are not themselves. In the midst of their enjoyments, they enjoy not themselves: They possess not, but are possessed. The world doth possess them. They are, at best, but Servants, and Slaves to the world. The world enjoyes them, but they do not enjoy themselves. *Solomon* telleth us, *Eccles. 6. 2. of a man, to whom God hath given Riches, but not power, to eat thereof.* Such a man, is a very Slave to what he hath, and cannot find in his heart, to serve himself with it. They suffer the world to eat out their very hearts, with Cares, and Troubles, and Thoughtfulness, so that they enjoy not themselves. Know this, that a quiet, and a comfortable enjoyment, of a mans self in a condition, is a good, and a sweet thing.

2. Concerning an Afflicted condition. How many are there, that do not enjoy, but lose themselves in that condition? There are many, when they

they are loſers in the world, do loſe themſelves to both, by their Impatiency, Murmuring, and Fretfulneſs. Our Saviour ſaith, *Luk.* 21. 19. *In your patience, poſſeſs ye your Souls,* (i. e.) *poſſeſs ye your Selves.* It telleth us, that an impatient man, doth not poſſeſs, nor enjoy himſelf. It is with an impatient man, as it is with ſome children, when you anger them, by taking away what they have in one hand, they throw away, what they have in the other hand too. Thus Satan tempts ſome, to throw away themſelves, when they find, that other things are taken away; and ſo they loſe themſelves in a condition. Let me tell you, that condition, in which a man enjoyes Himſelf, is good; in which he enjoyes his Reaſon, and regulates his Affections, and Paſſions by it. As *Solomon* ſaid, *That in the midſt of his Aberrations, his Wiſdom remained with him.* (i. e.) he had his Judgment, and Underſtanding about him. We ſhould bring our Affections, and Paſſions, to the Examination of Judgment, and Reaſon. If he rejoyce, it teacheth him, to put this queſtion to himſelf, What reaſon have I for it? And if he grieve, What reaſon have I for it? Is the thing worth my joy? and worth my ſorrow? So, to cloſe up this, enjoyment of a mans ſelf, conſiſts in this, in a ſweet tranquillity of Spirit, and temper of Soul; which neither Proſperity, nor Adverſity can alter. It is an equal Minde, in unequal Conditions.

12. This makes a condition good for us in this life, Our Adorning our Condition. There are many, that are a ſhame to their conditions, doing that, which is unbeſeeming their condition. No man need to be aſhamed of his condition, if he

be not a ſhame, to his condition. The Apoſtle ſpeaketh of Adorning our Generation, *Phil.* 2. 15. *Among whom, ye Shine as Lights, in the midſt of a crooked Generation.* So ſhould a man adorn his condition: Though it be Dark, yet he ſhould Shine in it.

Queſt. Wherein ſtands the Adorning of a man's Condition?

Anſw. In the Exerciſing and Acting the Graces of a Condition. The Stars in the Firmament, are an Ornament to it. So the Firmament of our Conditions, hath its Graces to Adorn it; the ſhining forth of which, is the Adorning of the condition. There are proſperity-Graces, and adverſity-Graces, and the acting of theſe Graces, is the adorning of the condition. A proſperous condition hath its graces, by the acting and excerciſing of which, a gracious Heart doth Adorn it. So an Afflicted condition, hath its Graces, which adorn it. It is ſad to ſee, how many are a ſhame, to their conditions; there being no appearance of grace, ſhining forth, ſuitable to their condition. We muſt know, as all Relations, and Conditions, have their Duties, ſo their Graces. Magiſtracy hath it's: They muſt be men, fearing God, Ruling in the fear of God, hating Covetouſneſs. Miniſtry hath it's Graces, As the Apoſtle ſheweth at large, in his Epiſtle to *Timothy*: Which Graces, are for the Adorning of their Profeſſions. So conditions have their Graces too, by which they are Adorned. A thankful Spirit, and a publique Spirit, and a bountiful, and inlarged heart, adorn a Proſperous Condition. As on the contrary, a patient, and meek, and humble Spirit, ſubmitting wholly, to the Will of God, adorns an Afflicted Condition. As a man by Unthankfulneſs, and Self-ſeeking, &c. ſhames a

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Prosperous Condition: So some, by their Impatiency, and Fretting, and Murmuring, &c. shame an Afflicted Condition: Of whom, we may say, They shame their conditions, and their conditions are a shame of them. How many are there, that have made their condition to be evil spoken of, by being a shame to their condition.

Thus I have finished the first sort of General Directions, concerning what is to be known of those, that will make a right Judgment of Conditions.

2. I now come to give you in, General Directions, concerning what is to be done, by those that will make a right Judgment of conditions.

1. He that will make a right judgment of his condition, must be much in inquiring of the Lord by prayer, what his minde, and meaning is in a condition. As prayer is the means, by which we come to know the mind and meaning of God, in his Word, so also in his Works, and so in those conditions he puts us into. We read of *Jeremiahs* inquiry, concerning the prosperous condition of the wicked, *Jer.* 12.1. *Why doth the way of the wicked prosper?* We are indeed, to take heed, of putting absolute Interrogatories to God; as if he were bound, to give an account of His Providences to us. Yet we may lawfully go to Him, in a humble way, to see what is His Minde, and Meaning in a Dispensation, and in a Condition. It is our Duty, to get as near God as we can, to know this. This is one thing, *Job*, in his Afflicted condition, did desire of God, *Job.* 10. 2. *Shew me, wherefore thou contendest with me.* (i e.) what this Affliction meaneth? whether it proceed from love, or hatred?

tred? whether it intend good, or evil? Are you in a proſperous condition, and would you make a judgment of it, whether it be good for you? Or in an Afflicted condition? The way to make a judgment of your condition, is, to be much in ſeeking to God by prayer, to know His minde, and meaning in a condition. Although the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of prayer, as a Duty, moſt ſuitable to an Afflicted condition, *Jam.* 5. 13. *If any among you be afflicted, let him pray.* Yet let me tell you, Prayer is a duty, that ſuits with every condition. As we are to enquire into the meaning of God, concerning Afflictions, ſo concerning a Proſperous condition: if he putteth us into it, we are to begg of Him, the interpretation of the condition. Many there be, that never ſay, as *Rebecca* did, *Why am I thus?* In theſe enquiries concerning conditions, we muſt know, we are not ſo much, to enquire after the reaſons of Gods dealing ſo with us, as of our duty, what we are to do in that condition. So then, prayer is a means, by which we muſt come to make a judgment of our condition. We ſhould get as near God as we can, to hear what He ſpeaks concerning our condition. As it is the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion, *Pſal.* 85. 8. *I will hark, what the Lord will ſpeak.* So we ſhould harken, What the Lord will ſpeak, concerning our condition. There is no man, can give a right judgment of an earthly condition, till he hear ſomething from Heaven, concerning it. There was of old, this cuſtom among the *Romans*, That it was not lawful, to propoſe any matter of moment in the Senate, *priuſquam de Cælo obſervatum erat*, before their Wizzards had made their Obſervations from the Sky, and Heavens.

What

What they did Impiouſly, and Superſtitiouſly, we ought to do Piouſly, in reſpect of conditions (*viz.*) Not to make a judgment of them, till we have heard from Heaven, concerning them. It is not by the obſervation of the houſes of the Planets, or their Aſpects, or their Oppoſitions, or Conjunctions; ſuch an obſervation is forbid by a voice from Heaven. But we are to hearken, what the Lord ſpeaketh to us, concerning our conditions; and Prayer is the means, by which (though we are on earth) we have an anſwer from Heaven. The *Jews* had two means, by which they received Anſwers from God. Firſt, by the Mouth of the Prophets, when the Spirit came upon them. Secondly, by the Prieſts, when they put on the Breſt-plate of Judgment. Thoſe wayes of Underſtanding the Minde of God, are ceaſed. We have the Word to go to, and Prayer, to make uſe of, *Jam.* 1. 5. *If any man lack Wiſdom, let him ask of God.* The Apoſtle ſpeaks there, of a man in an Afflicted condition, and ſpeaks to ſuch in an Afflicted condition, as thoſe that need Wiſdom, both for the managing of their condition, and for the making a right judgment of it. He telleth them, what they muſt do, they muſt ask this Wiſdom of God. It is as if the Apoſtle ſhould ſay, When you are in ſuch a condition, you need wiſdom.

1. Wiſdom, to diſcern God's end in it, and to find out the meaning of God, in a Diſpenſation. When we receive outward good things, from the Hand of God, or Afflictions, whether it be for good, or evil; It tends much, to the quieting, and and ſatisfying our Spirits in a condition, when we can find out, what is God's end in it.

2. Wiſ-

2. Wiſdom, to find out our duty in a condition. There are ſeaſonable, and proper duties, which belong to, and become every providence and diſpenſation. Now here is Wiſdom, to find them out, and to know what we have to do in our condition. It is ſaid of the men of *Iſſachar*, 1 *Chron.* 12. 32. *They had underſtanding of the times, and knew what Iſrael ought to do.* So, there is wiſdom required of a man, to know what to do in every condition. As one, being invited to a Feaſt, asked the Philoſopher, who was his Tutor, How he ſhould behave himſelf; *Remember thou art a King's Son, (i.e.)* Behave thy ſelf, as becometh thy Birth, and Dignity. So here is Wiſdom, to know the duties of our condition, and accordingly to behave our ſelves.

3. Wiſdom, to regulate, and moderate our affections, and paſſions, in a condition. That a man be not too much taken with the comforts, nor too much troubled with the croſſes of a condition. Now for the attaining of this Wiſdom, the Apoſtle gives this Direction, that we muſt ask of God.

2. He that will make a judgment of his condition, muſt be much in ſearching himſelf, to ſee what he is in a condition. I have ſaid before, The condition is to be judged of by the perſon, and that conditions are to men, as they are to, and in, their conditions. Here is the miſtake of many, they go to make a judgment of their conditions, before they make a judgment of themſelves. Our Saviour ſpeaketh, in *Mat.* 7. 3, 4. of them that ſee a *Mote in their Brothers eye, and diſcern not the Beam that is in their own eye.* They would go about to reform others, before they reform themſelves.

Thus

Thus ſome would go to make a judgment of conditions, before they make a judgment of themſelves; and that Ignorance is a Beam in their eyes, that keeps them from diſcerning a condition. There are ſome (as I have ſhewed you) to whom every condition is a Curſe; and ſome, to whom every condition is a Bleſſing. The great thing we are to do, is, to ſee of which number we are. *Pſal.* 77. we find *Ver.* 1, 2. *David* was in an Afflicted condition, and ſee what he doth in that condition. Firſt, he ſought the Lord, *Ver.* 2. *In the day of my trouble I ſought the Lord.* He made his Addreſſes to God. Secondly, he fell upon a ſearch of himſelf, *Verſ.* 6. *I communed with my own heart, and my ſpirit made diligent ſearch.* Where we ſee, he both ſought the Lord, and ſearched Himſelf. So that before a man can make a perfect judgment of a condition, there muſt be a ſearching of himſelf. There muſt be a communing with his own heart. We muſt underſtand our ſelves, before we can underſtand our condition. *Eccleſ.* 9. 2. *No man knoweth love or hatred, by what is before him.* When a man looks only upon the outward Diſpenſation, (*viz.*) Riches, and Honour, on the one hand; and Croſſes, and Afflictions on the other: A man may pore upon theſe, all the dayes of his life, and yet be never the wiſer; he may ſtare on them, till his eyes drop out, and yet not know, whether they are good, or evil for him, whether they ſpeak love or hatred. But then you will ask, What ſhould a man do in this caſe, that he may know? He muſt not look ſo much on things without him, as things within him; he muſt not ſo much eye, what his condition is, as what he is in his condition. It is

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not for a man to look what God doth without, but he must look what God hath done within him; to know the meaning of an outward Dispensation. Hath God made you one of His? hath He shed his Love abroad in your hearts? hath He given you, the New Name, which none knoweth, but he that hath it? have you, the Engravings of Heaven on your Spirits? have you Love to Jesus, written upon your hearts? and Holiness to Jehovah, upon your Fore-heads? By this, you may know the meaning of a condition. As it was said of *Luther*, That he knew, what was done in Heaven, by what was done in his own heart. Much more may we know the meaning of what is done on earth, by what is done within us. The outward Dispensation is dumb, and saith nothing of it self, in respect of Love and Hatred; it is something within a man, that must speak that. There is an expression, *Psal.* 25. 14. *The Secret of the Lord, is with them that fear Him, and he will shew them His Covenant.* We must know, in Gods Dispensations, there is a Secret; a Secret of Love, and a Secret of Hatred, and this lyeth hid in the Dispensation; so that a man, may look long enough upon the outward dispensation, and not see the Secret, that is in the dispensation. Now the Godly Man, and he that feareth God, knoweth this Secret of a Dispensation. God sheweth such a one His Covenant, so that he finds all coming in by Covenant, let it be what it will, whether outward Blessings, or outward Afflictions. In a word, Those that will make a judgment of their outward condition, must know, that all is Good, to those that are Good; and all is Evil, to those that are Evil. Wrath, and Hatred, and Hell, are written

ten on a wicked Mans outward mercies, and on a wicked Mans outward miſeries. Hell is Engraven, on the very Tooth-ach of a Reprobate. As on the contrary, Love is written, not only upon the Mercies, but alſo upon the Miſeries, of a Godly Man. Bleſſedneſs is engraven upon his Afflictions, and Perſecutions. So you ſee, that he, who will make a judgment of his condition, muſt firſt make a judgment of himſelf.

3. He that will make a judgment of his outward condition, muſt be ſure, to take a right view of his condition. The not doing this, is one great reaſon, why ſo many have been ſo groſly miſtaken about conditions, calling Good, Evil; and Evil, Good. We know, when a mans judgment is asked, concerning the goodneſs and value of a thing, he will firſt view it, before he gives his judgment of it. So we muſt do concerning conditions, view, before we judg. But you will ask, How may a man come to take a right view of his condition, that he be not miſtaken about it? For Anſwer to that, take theſe Directions.

1. He that will take a right view of a condition, muſt view it by Scripture Light. *David* was miſtaken, about conditions, till he went into the Sanctuary, and by the Light there, he ſaw, what he did not before diſcern. Many men, ſet up falſe lights, and view conditions by them, (*viz.*) the Judgment and Opinions of others, and their own Apprehenſions and Imaginations; Theſe are Glaſſes, through which, many look upon conditions, which make but falſe Repreſentations. Some tell us, In the

the Opticks, there is a Glaſs, that will repreſent a foul dirty way, ſo green and pleaſant, as if it were covered with Carpets. Through ſuch falſe Glaſſes, do many view their conditions. There are Magnifying Glaſſes, that will repreſent the Object, far bigger then it is; that will make a ſmall Fly, ſeem a Hornet; a Straw, a Staff; and a grain of Muſtard-ſeed, a Bean. Such a Glaſs, a mans own apprehenſion, and imagination is, in the viewing of his condition. They make the things of a condition, ſeem bigger to us, then they are. Thus ſometimes, the comforts of a condition, and the croſſes of a condition, are repreſented to us, bigger than they are. Now, he that will take a right view of a condition, muſt lay aſide theſe falſe lights and glaſſes, and muſt view his condition, by Scripture-Light. And that for theſe reaſons:

1. The Scripture will help a man, to make a true diſcovery of the things of a condition. The Scripture giveth us the beſt account of what the things of a proſperous condition are, (*viz.*) Riches and Honour; &c. And it gives us the beſt account, what Loſſes, and Croſſes, and Afflictions are. As for the firſt, The Scripture telleth us, *They are all but Vanity.* And that the beſt things of this world, ſtand upon two lame Leggs, (*viz.*) Uncertainty, and Inſufficiency. Nay, it is obſervable, it doth not tell us the vanity of outward things, only Notionally, but delivereth it to us as a Truth, that hath been Experimented and Tryed, by thoſe who both had a Will, and alſo Ability, to make the

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Experiment. Thus you find *Solomon* did; and, in the Book of the *Eccleſiaſtes*, we have him, giving in his Experiments, concerning the beſt of outward things, in this ſhort Sentence, *All is vanity*. And then for Afflictions, the Scripture ſets up a Light for us, for the taking a right view of them. And telleth us, what Verdicts have been paſſed, by thoſe who have had Tryals of them. Among others, *David*, who ſaid, *It was good for him, that he was afflicted*. To cloſe this: Scripture Light, in reſpect of this particular, muſt needs be a great advantage to a man, in his taking a view of his condition.

2. The Scripture will help us to view a condition, by diſcovering to us, What thoſe things are, that make a condition good, and without which a condition is not good. The Scripture is much, in making out to men, what it is, that is good indeed. *Solomon*, in his *Eccleſiaſtes*, ſheweth the miſtakes of men, concerning Happineſs, and makes it appear by Experience, that it did not lie in Honours, or Pleaſures, or Riches, &c. And obſerve how he cloſeth his Book, with a diſcovery of that, wherein mans Happineſs lieth, *Chap.* 12. 13. Hear the concluſion of the whole matter, *Fear God, and keep his Commandements, for this is the whole duty of man*. It is the *Totum hominis*, the whole, and the All of man. The Scripture, doth not only diſcover to men, what the good and evil of this world is; but alſo, what it is, that is good indeed, without which, a condition is not good, and with which, a condition is not evil. It ſheweth a man, That, without controverſy, this is good for a man in this life, (*viz.*) Pardon, and Peace, and Union with

with God, and an Interest in Jesus Christ, &c. Thus the Scripture helpeth a man, in viewing, by directing him to discover, what is good indeed, and makes a condition good to a man. It holds out a clear light to a man, by which he may find out, what it is, that speaks his condition good. *Augustin* said, of *Tullies* Works, They were once sweet to him, but now he found, no sweetness in them, because he found not *Jesus*, mentioned in them. The Scripture directs us, in the viewing of a condition, to do, as a man doth, when he cometh into a Richly-furnished-Shop, seeking after some rare piece of ware; though many be brought to his hand, yet he layeth them all aside, till he find the piece he desireth, and looks for. So it is in viewing the good of a condition, the Scripture will direct a man, to lay all aside, till he come to discern, that which is good indeed. In a prosperous condition, when Honour, and Riches, &c. come to hand, it teacheth him, to put the question to himself, Are there not better things then these? So in an Afflicted condition, it teacheth a man, to lay his Crosses, and Troubles, and Afflictions aside, and to put the question to himself, Whether there be not greater evils than those? And whether evils of Sinning, be not greater, than evils of Suffering. The Scripture teacheth a man, to view a condition, as *Samuel* did the Sons of *Jesse*, to find out *David*, whom the Lord had chosen. *Jesse* brings forth his Eldest Son, *Samuel* said, That is not he: he then, brought his seaven Sons before him, And *Samuel* answered, Neither hath the Lord chosen any of these: and then he cometh to *David*, who was the man looked after. In taking a view

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view of conditions, we must know, the Rule is this. In viewing a Prosperous Condition, you may see Honour, and Riches, and other things of the world, passing by you; But, put them by, bid them stand aside: Tell them, They are not the things, that make a man happy. So, in the taking a view, of an Afflicted condition, many evils may present themselves to us; But the Scripture telleth us, That these are not the evils, that we are to look upon, as the worst of evils.

3. The Scripture doth thus help us, in taking a view of our conditions; It unvayles conditions, and unfoldeth the Mysteries of a Condition; without which, a man cannot take a right view, nor make a right judgment of his condition. We find *David*, stumbling at the prosperity of Wicked men, and at the adversity of Godly Men; He knew not, what to think of it, When he saw waters of a full cup, wrung out to the one, and waters of Affliction to the other; he began to think, that he was on the wrong side, and that he had made a wrong choice: And these words were coming out of his mouth, *That he had cleansed his heart in vain.* (i. e.) He was about to say, It was in vain for him, and others, to be Godly, if thus they were dealt with, in this life; if they must be afflicted, and chastned, while wicked men have, what heart can wish. Now, how came *David*, to have his Judgment rectified, concerning these Dispensations of God? He telleth us, He went into the Sanctuary, and there he understood the Mystery of these Dispensations: There he found the Riddle Unfolded, and these Providences Unvayled. The Word of God, will help us, to Interpret the Works of

God. It will help us to ſee within the vayl of a condition, and to ſee the Wheel within the wheel. It will teach us, not only to look on the Motions of the wheels without, but will ſhew us, the Motions of the Wheels within. *Jer.* 12. 1. he puts the queſtion, *Why doth the way of the Wicked proſper?* He viewed their condition, and wondred at it. It was a myſtery to him, that ſuch men ſhould proſper, that did deal very Treacherouſly. The Prophet did not at firſt underſtand the Myſtery; Had he gon into the Sanctuary, he would have found, The way of the wicked did not proſper. And he found it afterwards, as appeareth *verſ.* 3. *Pull them out, as Sheep for the Slaughter, &c.* q. d. Lord, I partly ſee into the Myſtery of this Diſpenſation; I find that their proſperity, is but a preparing them, for the day of Slaughter. That thou doſt deal with them, as men do with thoſe Beaſts they intend for the Slaughter; They put them into the fatteſt Grounds, and the beſt Paſtures. Scripture teacheth a man, in viewing a condition, to view it upon both ſides: and indeed, till a man do ſo, he will never make a right view of a condition. Conditions are like that Cloud, by which God guided the Children of *Iſrael* through the Wilderneſs; they have their bright, and their black ſide. Some in viewing a condition, look only upon it's bright ſide, when the condition may have a black ſide. So, ſome in viewing a proſperous condition, look only upon the bright ſide, whereas, if they looked upon the other ſide, they would find it black, and diſmal. So concerning an adverſe condition, ſome look only upon the black ſide, and ſee nothing but what is ſad; whereas, if they looked upon the o-

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ther ſide of their condition, they might ſee it Bright, and Guilded with Love.

4. By Scripture-Light, we ſee another thing, (*viz.*) How to improve a condition. We can never take a right view of a condition, till we view It with it's Improvements. It is in viewing, and making a judgment of conditions, as it is in a Huſband-man's viewing of Lands; He conſidereth, Whether they are to be Improved. Though they ſeem Bare, and Barren, yet he conſidereth, Whether they may not be improved to be worth ſomuch an Acre. So, the right viewing of conditions, is, to view them, with their Improvements. Now the Scripture helpeth us in this particular.

1. It will ſhew us, How the Saints of Old, improved their conditions. How they Husbanded, both Proſperous, and Adverſe Conditions, and what they made of them. And thus it helpeth us, to view a condition with It's Improvements. As the Scripture ſheweth us, What the Saints of Old, were in their ſeveral Generations, ſo what they were in their ſeveral Conditions; when they were High, and Low; Rich, and Poor. It ſhews us, How *Job* Improved his Condition, when he was *Job* the Wealthy, and Honourable; And how he Improved his condition, when he was *Job* the Miſerable and Afflicted. It ſheweth us, what *David* made of his condition, when he was *David* the King, and when he was *David* the Perſecuted. *Plutarch* wrote a Treatiſe, to ſhew, How a man might get profit by an Enemy. The Scripture is much in ſhewing us, how to make profit of conditions, and that by ſetting before us, the Improvements that others have made of them.

2. The Scripture teacheth us, the Art of improving them. It not only ſheweth us, that they are improvable, but withal ſheweth us, how we may improve them. There is a Story of a Romane, who was Accuſed of Witch-craft; The Reaſon given was this, That when his Neighbours Land brought forth little, his brought forth abundantly, though there was but a hedg betwixt them. So this was the Charge, That by Witch-craft, he drew all the Strength, and Fatneſs of their Soyl into his, and by that means, Enriched his own Land, and Impoveriſhed theirs: Being brought before the Judges, he brought forth all the Tools, and Inſtruments, which he uſed in the Tilling, and Manuring of his Land: and anſwered, *Hæc ſunt veneficia mea*, Theſe are my Witch-crafts; And withal, told his Judges, I am at Work, when my Neighbours are aſleep; I Work, when they Play: They are negligent, and uſe not that kind of Huſbandry that I do; and this is the true Reaſon, why my Crop exceeds theirs. Concerning conditions, it is thus, There is ſuch an Art of improving them, that ſome may be great Gainers, when others get nothing by them. This Art the Scripture teacheth us, How to make a Spiritual Advantage of Temporal Conditions. This is an Art, that Philoſophy teacheth not. Indeed, Philoſophy teacheth the Art of Moral improvements of conditions, but not Spiritual; Scripture onely teacheth that. Alchymiſts tell us, There is an Art, of turning Baſer Mettalls, into Gold. Philoſophy goeth thus far, to teach us the Art, of turning conditions (as I may ſay) into Braſs, or Copper, or Silver; but it can never teach us the Art, of turning them into Gold;

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The Scripture only teacheth that. Whoſoever readeth the Works of *Tully*, *Seneca*, and others of that ſort, ſhall find indeed, excellent Directions, for the Moral improvement of conditions; but as for a Spiritual improvement, they tell you nothing. That was above their reach, and their light did not attain unto it. Now this great Art, the Scripture teacheth; it teacheth a man the Art, of makeing Thorns, bear Grapes; and of making Thiſtles, bear Figgs. (*i. e.*) When a condition is Thorny, and Prickly, the Scripture ſheweth a man, that he may gather ſweet and pleaſant Fruit, from the Thorns, and Thiſtles, of his Condition. As the Apoſtle ſaith, *Heb.* 12. 11. That *Affliction yieldeth the quiet Fruit of Righteouſneſs*. Where you ſee Thorns, bearing Grapes. In a word, The Scripture teacheth a man the Art, of Sayling by the Wind of a Condition, let it blow from what quarter it will. It is reported, That thoſe that Sayle into the *Indies*, find in ſome places, the Winds blow conſtantly for ſix Months one way, and for the other ſix Months, quite contrary. Let the Wind of a condition, blow which way it will, either from the North, or from the South; yet the Scripture teacheth a Chriſtian, the skill of ſetting his Sayles ſo, as that they ſhall further him in his Voyage towards Heaven.

5. By Scripture-Light, a man cometh to diſcern the dangers of a condition. To diſcover what Rocks, and Shelves, are in the Sea of every condition, that he may know how to avoyd them. A man can never take a right view of a condition, till he hath viewed it, with it's Dangers, Snares, and Temptations. Of theſe, the Scripture makes a Diſcovery two wayes. 1. By

1. By way of Caution. So it Cautionates men, concerning the dangers of a Condition, both Proſperous and Adverſe. As you may ſee, *Deut.* 6. 11, 12. and *Deut.* 8. 11, 12, 13. *When thou haſt eaten, and art full; Take heed thou forget not the Lord thy God.* Forgetfulneſs of God, is that, that is to be taken heed of in a proſperous condition. The Scripture is frequent in giving ſuch Cautions, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Pſal.* 62. 10. *Jer.* 9. 23. *Let not the Rich Man glory in his Riches, &c.*

2. The Scripture preſents us, with the Examples of thoſe, that have miſcarried, and fallen by their conditions. It ſheweth us, againſt what Rocks, ſome in their Sayling, have daſhed their Ships. *Deut.* 32. 15. *Jeſurun waxed fat, and kicked.* *Neh.* 13. 26. we find how *Solomon* miſcarried in his Proſperity. *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaid in that condition, *Dan.* 4. 30. *Is not this great Babel that I have built, &c?* In Scripture, you have the Saints ſet out to us, as in their Graces, ſo in their Sins. You have heard (ſaith the Apoſtle) of the patience of *Job*; ſo from the ſame Scripture, we hear likewiſe of his impatiency. As it acquaints us with the pride of *Iſrael*, when they were in their proſperity; ſo with their murmuring, and repining, when they were in adverſity. 2 *Chron.* 32. 25. it is ſaid of *Hezechiah*, *After he was recovered, that he rendred not again, according to what the Lord had done to him; for his heart was lifted up.*

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6. Scripture-Light, discovereth another thing concerning Conditions; And that is this, What are the Alloys, and Correctives, of a Condition; without the knowledg of which, we can never take a right view of Conditions. On the one hand, the pleasantness of a condition may deceive us; and, on the other hand, the seeming ill-favouredness of a condition, may make us mistaken, in making a judgment of it. The Scripture discovereth this to us, What are the true Correctives of a Condition? What may allay the Sweetness, and Pleasantness of Prosperity, that they be not too much lifted up? And what will correct the bitter ingredients of an Afflicted Condition, that they be not too much dejected and cast down? It is sometimes with men in conditions, as it is with those that go to Sea, of whom the Psalmist speaketh, *Psal.* 107. 26. *They mount up to the Heavens, and they go down again to the depths.* So it is in conditions. A man in a prosperous condition, when the waters of a condition are full, he is apt to be high, and high-minded: But he must know, waters of a condition may fall, and that conditions have their depths. There are the full Tides, and the Ebbs of a condition. It is sometimes full Sea with a man; the comforts of a condition, flow in a pace, and then a man is apt to be lifted up. And then there is the ebb of a condition, when there is a decrease, and diminishing of those comforts; and then men are apt to faint, and be cast down. Now, Scripture-Light discovereth to us, what helps we have in this case. We know how it is with Fishermens Nets, They have Lead, to make them sinck; and they have Cork at them, to make them swim.

And both theſe are in Scripture, put upon outward conditions.

1. For a Proſperous Condition, There is Lead put upon it, to keep a man Low, and Humble; and to Sink him in that condition. The Scripture telleth us, of the Vanity of Riches, and Honour, &c. It telleth us, of the Brevity, Uncertainty, and Inſufficiency, that is in the Beſt of outward things. Withal, it acquaints us, with the Temptations, Cares, Troubles, Diſquietments, wherewith thoſe things are attended. It telleth us, That the increaſing of them, is but the increaſing of Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit. Again, it telleth us this, That a mans happineſs lieth not in them; that a man may have them, and yet be miſerable; and that, being vanity, they cannot cure a mans vanity. Now this is ſome of the Lead, that the Scripture putteth to a proſperous condition, to keep men low, and humble in it. The conſideration of theſe things, are as Ballaſt to a Ship, which makes it Sayl eevenly, and ſteadily. When a man is in a proſperous condition, his ſpirit is apt to be lifted up; and ſo it needs Ballaſt, to keep it from Fleeting at random, upon the waters of proſperity. Now the Scripture is much in ſhewing, what it is that ſhould keep the Spirit low, in a high condition. Thus, 1*Tim.*6.17. *Charge them that are Rich in this world, that they be not high-minded; and that they truſt not in uncertain Riches.* (Obſerve); There is the Ballaſt,

Ballaſt, and there is the Lead, to keep down the Spirit in a Rich condition, (*viz.*) They are uncertain Riches, 1 *Cor.* 7. 29, 30, 31. *Brethren, the time is ſhort, and the faſhion of this world paſſeth away.* q. d. Remember, The time is ſhort, for your enjoying of the comforts of this life, and the faſhion of the world goeth away; the world is upon Gate; and Marrying, and Buying, and Selling, &c. will ſhortly have an end. I ſhall cloſe this, with that place, *Jam.* 1. 10. *Let the Rich rejoyce, in that he is made low*; The Expoſitions of the place are divers, but without doubt, the meaning of the Apoſtle is this, (when he ſaith) *Let him that is Rich, rejoyce in this, that he is made low.* That is, There is no Rich man, but hath reaſon to be low, and humble, if he doth rightly conſider his condition. And that this is the meaning, appears by the following words, *For as the flower of Graſs he ſhall paſs away.* i. e. The beauty and glory of his condition, is but fading, and vaniſhing, like the Flower of Graſs. Here is Lead, to make the Spirit ſinck, in a high and proſperous Condition.

2. Concerning an Adverſe Condition, There the Scripture comes in with Cork, to make it Swim, and to keep up the Spirit of a man in that condition. That we may not be too much caſt down; it hath it's Correctives for the croſſes of a condition, and ſomewhat to allay the bitterneſs of ſuch a condition. It preſents us with ſomewhat, that

that helps to keep the head above water, and to keep a man from drowning, when the waters of Affliction overflow. Scripture puts ſomewhat under, to hold up the Spirit in that condition; (*viz.*) Promiſes, and Comforts, ſuited to ſuch a Condition; With God's End in Afflicting; With the ſweet Fruit of Afflictions; With what Good many have gotten by their Conditions; With what Afflictions are, being compared with the Glory that is to be Revealed. Theſe conſiderations are as Cork, that the Scripture puts to an Adverſe Condition. 2 *Cor.* 1. 5. *As our Sufferings for Chriſt abound in us, ſo our Conſolations through Chriſt abound.* Thoſe Conſolations are Cork to the Condition. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Jam.* 1. 9. *Let the Brother of low degree rejoyce, in that he is exalted.* He ſpeaks there, to Chriſtians that were in a low, and Suffering condition. And ſee, there was Cork, to make them hold up their heads, and ſwim in that condition; (ſaith the Apoſtle) *he is Exalted.* According to the Original it is, ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ, *in his ſublimity*, being a brother, he is a Member of Chriſt. And the Apoſtle ſetteth before Chriſtians, the Dignity and Honour of their Spiritual Eſtate; to Counter-poyſe the Miſery, and Obſcurity of Afflictions. Thus the Scripture ſheweth a man, How he may be preſerved from the dangers, of the heights and depths of conditions; that neither proſperity may lift him up too high, nor adver-

adverſity caſt him down too low; but that a Chriſtian may have an equal Spirit, in unequal conditions. There is nothing we have in a Proſperous Condition, but we have it by Divine Donation: And why ſhould a Chriſtian then be lifted up, when he hath nothing but what he hath received? And there is nothing befalleth us in an Afflicted Condition, but what is by Divine Ordination; and why ſhould we then fret at it? To cloſe this, The Scripture teacheth a man, how to keep himſelf Sober in Proſperity, that he be not overcome with the Sweet and Pleaſant Wine of that Condition: And alſo, Sober in Adverſity, that he be not overcome with the Gall and Wormwood of that Condition. The Scripture ſpeaketh of a Drunkenneſs, that is incident to an Afflicted condition, *Iſa.* 51. 21. *Hear thou this, thou Afflicted, and Drunken, but not with Wine.*

Thus for the Firſt Direction, for the taking a right View of Conditions. It muſt be done by Scripture-Light.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

11. HE that will take a right View of a Condition, muſt take a right Standing for the Viewing of it. Conditions muſt be viewed at a due and convenient Diſtance. It is in the viewing of a Condition, as it is in the viewing of a Picture; the Art in Drawing, is beſt diſcerned at ſome convenient diſtance. The reaſon why many are miſtaken about their Conditions, is, Their ſetting their Conditions too near them, when they take a View of them. Thus they ſet the Comforts of a condition, and the Croſſes of a condition, ſo near to them, that they cannot take a right View of them. It is with men, in this Caſe, as it is with a man in the midſt of a great Wood, or in the midſt of a great City. When he is at ſome diſtance from them, he hath a fuller View of them, than when he was in the midſt of them, becauſe his ſight is bounded, and terminated, that he can ſee but a little way. He ſeeth, it may be, but a Street, or ſome part of a Street; When, being but at ſome convenient Diſtance from the City, and having a little advantage of Ground, he hath a full view of the City, in reſpect of Greatneſs, Length, Circuit, &c. Thus it is, in reſpect of conditions; When a man is in the midſt of the comforts of a condition, in the midſt of his Honour, Wealth, and Proſperity, he ſeeth but a little way, and cannot take a full View of his condition. So it is, when a man is in the midſt of his Croſſes, and Afflictions, he

he diſcerneth but a little of his condition. And thus, not taking a right View of their Conditions, they make a falſe Judgement of them. *Solomon* hath a paſſage, *Prov.* 18. 1. *Through deſire, a man having ſeparated himſelf, ſeeketh, or intermedleth, with all wiſdom.* The words are diverſly interpreted. In the Margin we read thus, *He that ſeparateth himſelf, ſeeketh according to his deſire, and intermedleth in every buſineſs.* The meaning ſeemeth to be this, That a man, that ſeeketh after Wiſdom and Knowledg, hath his retirements; His deſire of Wiſdom, makes him ſometimes come off from his ſecular employments, and ſet them at a diſtance from him. It makes him ſequeſter himſelf from all his worldly Buſineſſes, that he may ſeek after Wiſdom; and that he may be the freer for Study, and Meditation, and a conſideration of things, What they are. Thus it is, in reſpect of Conditions. If a man will take a right View of his condition, and will get Wiſdom, to make a judgment of it; he muſt, for a while, (as I may ſay) ſeparate himſelf from it, and look upon it at ſome Diſtance. The Apoſtle gives this Direction, for the taking of a right View of conditions, 1 *Cor.* 7. 29,30,31. *Let thoſe that have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that Rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and they that Poſſeſs, as though they poſſeſſed not, &c.* This ſheweth us, that then we take a right View of things, when we look on them at a diſtance. Thoſe things are worſt ſeen, that we are on the ſame ſide with. An Houſe is beſt viewed, when we are on the other ſide the Street. So it is in reſpect of Conditions; we ſhould view the condition, as though we were not in the condition. And ſo

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for an Afflicted condition, we ſhould view it at a diſtance. *Let them* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that weep, be as though they wept not.* Thus the beſt view of a condition, is, To look upon a condition, to view it upon the other ſide of the Street, to view it at a Diſtance. It is often-times Self in a condition, that hinders from taking a right View of a condition. If we could ſeparate our ſelves from our Conditions, and look upon them, as other mens Conditions, and not our own, we ſhould take the better View of them. There was a Nobleman of this Nation, who had three of his Sons drowned together in the River of *Trent:* The Father had not, as yet, received the ſad tydings of their Deaths. It was thought good he ſhould be prepared for the tydings, before they came. Upon this account, was that Learned, and Prudent Prelate, Biſhop *King*, deſired to go to him. He very wiſely managed the buſineſs. He did not, at firſt, tell the Nobleman what was befallen him; but fell upon a General diſcourſe of an Afflicted condition, and ſo gave the Nobleman a view of his condition afar off. The Nobleman aſſented to all the Biſhop ſaid, and anſwered, That if God ſhould bring him into ſuch a condition, he did hope, he ſhould be content, and ſubmit to His will. Upon this, the Biſhop brings the condition nearer to him, and putteth this Queſtion to him: *Admit the Lord ſhould take from you, your worldly Enjoyments, your outward Comforts; and ſhould break off the Olive-Branches from about your Table.* The Nobleman anſwered, That *he hoped he ſhould be therewith content.* Upon this, the Biſhop came nearer, and told him, It was his condition, *That his Sons were drowned*; and

and therefore desired him to do as he had said. If he had, at first, shewed him what was his condition, he had been at a losse, in taking a View of it. Herein was the Prudence of the Bishop seen, In giving him a View of it at a distance. So the best way for the taking a right View of conditions, is, To view them at a distance.

Thus for the general Directions, concerning

What is to be { Known / Done }

by those, That will make a Judgment of Conditions.

I come now to the Particular Directions, Concerning the making a Judgement of Conditions: And so, how a man may know, What is good for him in this life. So here we are to shew, How a man may make a Judgement, both of a Prosperous, and Adverse Condition.

1. Concerning the making a Judgement of a Prosperous condition. The Question is this:

Question. How may a Man know, That a Prosperous condition is good for a man in this Life?

Answ. By these things a Man may know it.

1. If outward prosperity, be no hindrance, to Inward and Spiritual Prosperity. It was the Wish of St. *John*, concerning *Gaius*, 3. *Epist. V.* 2. *I wish thou mayest Prosper and be in Health, even as thy Soul Prospereth.* Some think, that *Gaius* had a Sickly Body, but an Healthy Soul.! The contrary is seen by many, They have Healthy, and Prospering Bodies, but Unhealthy, and Unprospering Souls. Thus it is with many, They have Prospering Estates

Eſtates, but Poor, and Unproſpering Souls. Their outwards, eat up their inwards; As *Pharaohs* lean Kine, did eat up the Fat. There are many, whoſe worldly Riches, do eat up their Spiritual. Though they are Rich in the world, yet they are not Rich towards God, and in reſpect of their Souls. How many are there, whom outward Fulneſs cauſeth to deſpiſe the Hony-Comb of the Goſpel? Remember this, When a mans outward condition, is accompanied with the Soul's improſperity, it is naught for him. When, in a proſperous condition, men are thoughtleſs of their Soul's proſperity; This ſpeaketh a condition Evil for a man.

2. We may know it thus, If we uſe the things of a Proſperous Condition with right Conſiderations,

1. Of their Changeableneſs.
2. Of their Dangerouſneſs.
3. Of their Uſefulneſs.
4. Of their Inferiority.
5. Of their Emptineſs.
6. Of our own Mortality.
7. Of the Accompt to be given.

1. If we uſe them, with a right Conſideration of their Changeableneſs. Some there are, who, when they are ſet upon a Mountain of Proſperity, think their Mountain to be ſo Strong, that it cannot be Removed. This was *Davids* fault, when he ſaid in his Proſperity, *He ſhould never be removed.* *Job* telleth us, That in the day of his Proſperity, he thought of Adverſity. He looked upon the things of his condition as changeable, and ſo he found

found them to be; when of the Richeſt man in the Eaſt, he became the pooreſt man in the world. We muſt know, The beſt things of a condition, are mutable: The Comforts of a condition, may become Croſſes. Children are looked upon as Comforts; And yet we read of *Auguſtus*, that he had three Daughters, and that they proved ſuch croſſes to him, that he was wont to call them, His *Tria Carcinomata*, His three Ulcers or Botches: And he was often heard to ſay, *Utinam vel cælebs vixiſſem, vel orbus periiſſem.* Oh, that I had either lived Unmarried, or dyed Childleſs. It is then right, When we uſe the things of a Proſperous Condition with right Conſiderations of their Vanity, Brevity, Mortality, Mutability. There was an Ambaſſador from a Great Prince, that had this Sentence Engraven upon his Watch, which he read once every day, *Favour may turn into Diſfavour, and Grace into Diſgrace.* But of this, I have ſpoken in a former Tract.

2. When we uſe the things of a proſperous condition, with the conſideration of their dangerouſneſs; that they are things in which men Uſually ſin, and in which they may Eaſily ſin. When we conſider, what ſnares and temptations attend that condition; and thereupon, we become more watchful. But of this we have ſpoken before, and ſhall but touch it here.

3. When we uſe the things of a condition, with the right conſideration of their Uſefulneſs; that as they are things uſeful, ſo to conſider, what uſe we make of them. As they are eaſily made matter of ſin, ſo they may be made matter of duty. In this the excellency of a gracious heart is ſeen, in mak-

ing Duty out of that, out of which others make Sin. *Luke* 16. 9. *Make you friends* (saith our Saviour) *of the unrighteous Mammon.* Where Riches are called Unrighteous Mammon, as for other reasons so chiefly for this, Because they are the things that men easily, and usually sin in. Yet our Saviour sheweth, they have their usefulness, When he saith, *Make you friends of them.* So then, Would a man know, whether prosperity be good for him; I would ask him this, What use he doth make of the things of a prosperous condition? Prosperity is to a man, as a man useth it: 1 *Cor.* 7. 31. The Apostle speaketh, *of using the world, as not abusing it.* Now, a thing is then abused, when it is not put to the use for which it was given; but put to wrong uses. Thus there is an abusing of the world, and the things of a prosperous condition, when we put them to wrong uses. Thus, many abuse their Honour, and abuse their Riches, &c. when they make this use of them, To feed their lusts, to hearden their hearts against God and His Word, to raise their Names and Families, to Oppress their Brethren, to make them proud, and high-minded: This is making that use of them, that they were not given for; and this is abusing them. God never gave these things, to be food for mens lusts, to feed their pride, and to feed their covetousness. He never gave Riches, and Honour, and Possessions to men, to make them proud, and high-minded. Thus, many abuse the good things of this life; Their Wealth, their Apparrel, their very Meat, and Drink; by putting them to other uses then God intended them for. As the Lord complaineth, *Hos.* 2. 8. *She did not know, that I gave her*

her Corn, and Wine, and Oyle, and multiplied their Silver, and their Gold, which they prepared for Baal. They put thoſe things to other uſes, then God intended them for. God never gave thoſe things for that end, To ſerve *Baal*, and their Idols with them. Thus we ſee, how the Lord telleth *Iſrael* of her miſ-uſing, and abuſing the things of her Proſperity, *Ezek.* 16. 10, 11, 12, 13. He telleth her, what He had done for her, how He had Cloathed her with Broidered Garments, and fine Linnen, and Silk; He had decked her with Ornaments, Chains, Bracelets, Jewels, and Gold; He gave her fine Flower, and Hony, and Oyle. Now ſee, to what uſes ſhe put theſe things, you ſhall find, to ſuch uſes as God never intended them for; as you may ſee, *Verſ.* 16, 17, 18, 19. of the ſaid Chapter, *They beſtowed all upon Idols.* The Lord ſaith, *Jer.* 7. 31. *Of their burning their Sons, and Daughters, in the fire, and Sacrificing them to the Idols, that he commanded them not, neither came it into his heart.* So we may ſay, that many put the things of this life, to that Uſe that God never commanded, neither ever intended. So then, in a proſperous condition, we ſhould put this Queſtion to our ſelves, What uſe we make of the things of the condition? In a proſperous condition, Two things are to be eyed by us, for the making a right uſe of the things of the condition.

1. Precepts.
2. Patterns.

1. Precepts in the Scripture, commanding us to what uſe to put the things of a proſperous condition. The Scripture a-

bounds in them, *Prov.* 3. 9. *Honour the Lord with thy ſubſtance. Deut.* 28. 47. where we may ſee, what is our Duty by the Threatning. *Becauſe thou didſt not ſerve the Lord with joyfulneſs, and gladneſs of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore, &c.* Where ſee, What is a man Duty when he is in a proſperous condition? It is this, When God giveth abundance of all things, that we ſhould ſerve Him with joyfulneſs, and gladneſs of heart. God doth not give abundance to men, that they ſhould live more proudly, but that they ſhould ſerve Him more chearfully. When He enlargeth our eſtates, He expecteth the enlargment of our hearts toward Him in Duty, and Service. 1 *Tim.* 6. 18. *Charge them* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *that are Rich in this world, that they do good, and be ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate.* And *Verſ.* 19. *Laying up in ſtore for themſelves, a good Foundation, &c.* Where he ſheweth, what uſes men ſhould put their Riches to, (*viz.*) to do good with them, to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked. And then, to lay up a good Foundation for the time to come. Some men make only this uſe of their Riches, to lay a foundation of Greatneſs for themſelves, and families, and poſterity, for time to come in this world; but neglect laying a good foundation for themſelves to Eternity.

Thus for the Precepts of the Word, concerning the Uſe we ſhould make of the things of a proſperous condition.

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2. We must eye Patterns, and see what uses the Saints have made of the things of a prosperous condition. Thus you have *Davids* example, 2 *Sam.* 7. 1. when God had given him peace, and prosperity, he considereth how he might honour God, with what God had given him; and so resolveth upon building a House for God: And when he found it was the mind of God, that he should not do it, but his son *Solomon*; he thereupon, did bequeath his Gold, and his Silver, to *Solomon* for that use; and stirred up the Princes, and Nobles, to do the like, 1 *Chron.* 29.12. *Riches and Honour* (saith he) *come from thee:* and *ver.* 13. *All things come from Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.* Thus you may see what use *Job* made of the things his prosperity, *Job* 29. 12, 13, &c. You will there see, what use he made of his Honour, Power, and Wealth.

4. When we use the things of a prosperous condition, with a right consideration of their Inferiority, and Subordination, in relation to higher things. This consideration, will keep us from setting our Hearts, and Affections on them. It will make us set Honour and Riches, and the Best things of this Life, upon the foot-stool, and not upon the throne of our Hearts. In a prosperous condition, we are to set the things of it in their due place. Some there are, who set them so high, as though they were the only things; when, as they are but *bona Scabelli*, the good things of the Foot-stool. It is then Evil, when we have a higher e-

ſteem of them, than we ought to have. Remember, Theſe are not the things that are to have the preheminence. The Apoſtle exhorts us, *Col.*3.1. To *thoſe ſeek things that are Above*; and *ver.*2. To *ſet our affections on the things Above, and not on the things of the Earth.* He ſpeaketh there of two ſorts of Things; There are τὰ ἄνω, *the things Above*; And τὰ κάτω, or, as the Apoſtle ſaith, τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, *the things of the Earth*: And biddeth us *Seek, and ſet our affections upon the things that are Above.* He uſeth two words, *viz.* ζητεῖτε, which notes, ſeeking with the whole ſtrength, and endeavour; And φρονεῖτε, which notes, The minding of thoſe things with the whole Soul. This ſheweth, a man is not to look upon the beſt things of this Life, as thoſe things that are the Beſt. They are to have no more degrees of Affection, then there are degrees of Good in them. It was good Counſel, that one gave to a near Relation of mine, concerning his Horſe; When ſhe ſaw him too much taken with him, ſhe ſaid, *Sir, love a Horſe, as a Horſe.* So we ſhould the Creature, but as the Creature; and the things of the world, as the things that are inferior to the things of another World. So, then it is right, when we uſe the Good things of this life, with a conſideration of their Inferiority.

5. When we uſe the things of a proſperous condition, with a right conſideration of their Emptineſs and vanity. When your condition is fulleſt, yet you look upon the things of your condition as empty, and that will not give ſatisfaction to the Soul. As their Inferiority ſpeaketh them unſuitable, to the ſpirit of man; ſo their emptineſſe, ſpeaketh them unſatisfactory. It is happy with

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a man, when he is in a high condition, that he can look upon the things of his condition, as low things; and when he is in a full condition, to look upon all the things of this condition, as empty. When God changeth our condition, then (it may be) we can do it. Then we can say, Now I see, that Honour, and Riches, are but vain and empty things. But it is best, when a man can, in the heighth of his Prosperity, give such a Censure of them. When *Gilimer*, King of the *Vandals*, was brought prisoner before *Justinian*, sitting in Majesty upon his Throne, he cried out, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. This he did, in his Adverse Condition, when he stood prisoner at the Bar. They were the words of *Solomon*; but uttered by him, when he was in the heighth of his Prosperity, and when he sate upon the Throne. The consideration of the emptiness, and vanity, that is in the best things of a prosperous condition, will keep a man from taking up with them: It will keep a man from being deceived by them, as promising more than they can perform. Our Saviour speaketh of the deceitfulness of Riches, *Mat.* 13.22. the Greek word, is, ἡ ἀπάτη, the imposture, and fallacy of Riches. It signifieth, a drawing out of the way. So there is a deceitfulness in the things of a prosperous condition; they are apt to draw a man out of the way, to look for comfort, and contentment in them, when it is not to be found. This consideration, will prevent those Dreams that a man is apt to have in that Condition. As we read, *Isai.* 29.8. of the dreams of the hungry and thirsty man, that he Dreams he Eates and Drinks, but when *he awakes, his Soul is empty*. Some there are, that Dream of

contentment, and ſatisfaction in their condition, that at laſt find it but a phantaſie, and a dream. Thoſe then, that would make a Judgment of a proſperous condition, muſt put the queſtion to themſelves, Whether they uſe the things of their condition, with a conſideration of their emptineſs? We ſay of Wells, when they want Water, that they are empty, though they may be full of other things; as Mud, and Sand, and Stones. So the beſt things of this World, are but empty things; becauſe they have not that in them, that the Soul ſeeketh after, and that will give ſatisfaction to the Soul. There is no Satisfaction, where there is not Suitableneſs. Theſe things were never made for the Soul; and therefore they can no more ſatisfie it, than you can fill a purſe, or a cheſt, with Learning.

6. Do you uſe the things of a proſperous condition, with this conſideration, *viz.* Of your own Mortality? Then it is right, when we conſider, As the brevity of Worldly things, and that they have an end; ſo, when we conſider our own ends alſo, this conſideration, will make us ſober in the uſe of them. 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. The Apoſtle exhorteth to Sobriety, in the uſe of the things of this Life, upon this ground, *viz. The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore Sober.* Where, by Sobriety, is meant, A moderate uſe of the things of this Life; and the Motive to enforce it, is this, *The end of all things is at hand:* The end of your worldly Enjoyments, the end of your Lives, and the end of the World it ſelf. This is the Miſery, that many in a proſperous condition, as they conſider not, What the things of their condition are, *viz.* Corruptible,

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and Changeable; ſo they conſider not, What themſelves are in their condition, *viz.* Frail, and Mortal creatures. Some there are, that ſo uſe the things of this Life, as if they ſhould, for ever, live to Enjoy, and Uſe them. The Pſalmiſt telleth us, What man is at his beſt eſtate, *Pſal.* 39. *Surely every man, at his beſt eſtate, is altogether Vanity.* A proſperous condition is, then, Ill for a man, when it makes him forget his own condition; and it is good for a man, when it holds an agreement with a dying ſtate. 1 *Cor.* 7. 29. *Brethren,* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *the time is ſhort, &c.* As if he ſhould ſay, You have but a ſhort time to enjoy theſe things, To enjoy Wives, and Poſſeſſions, and all the things of this Life: As you know not, how ſoon they may be taken from you, ſo you know not how ſoon you may be taken from them. *The time is ſhort.* The time, in reſpect of the things themſelves, and their continuance, is ſhort, and the time of your lives is ſhort. If thoſe, that lived in the beginning of the world, gave themſelves ſo much to the building of Cities; it was not much to be wondered at, becauſe they had more time before them, then we have, who live in theſe latter ages. They, by common courſe of nature, lived 500. 600. 700. years; but our time is ſhort, it is drawn into a narrow compaſs; And the conſideration of this, will help us to be ſober, and moderate, in the uſe of the things of that condition; and make us look upon Honour, and Riches, and Relations, as things that we muſt ſhortly part with. It will help us, to uſe them with weaned affections, as a Traveller doth the pleaſures of his Inn; he ſtandeth not to build himſelf a houſe at every pleaſant place he paſ-

ſeth by; he conſidereth, he is on his Journy, going to his Home. It is good for a man in a proſperous condition, to have thoughts of his Long-Home, whither he is going. So then, the great queſtion we ſhould put to our ſelves, is this, Whether our uſing the things of this life, be ſuch, as holdeth an agreement with a dying State? *Jam.* 4. 13, 14. The Apoſtle ſpeaketh of ſome, that *would go into ſuch, and ſuch a City, and there live, and get gain: Whereas* (ſaith he) *you know not what may be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is but a Vapour, &c.* As if he ſhould ſay, You conſider not your own Frailty, and Mortality; if you did, you would not be ſo Carnally-confident as you are. Remember in a proſperous condition, you are thoſe that dwell in Tabernacles of Clay, whoſe foundation is in the Duſt, and whoſe breath is in your Noſtrils; dwelling in an open houſe, and ready every moment to depart. Remember you muſt go down to the Grave, and the glory of your condition ſhall not deſcend with you, *Pſal.* 49. 17.

7. Do you uſe the things of a proſperous condition, with this conſideration, That they are things for which you muſt give an Account? I ſhewed you before, that they have their uſefulneſs, and men muſt give an account, How they have uſed them. We muſt know, a proſperous condition hath many burthens, *(viz.)* of Dangers, Temptations, Cares, Duties; and here is the greateſt of all, that of an Accompt: *Rom.* 14. 12. *Every one of us, ſhall give account of our ſelves to God.* By giving an accompt of our ſelves to God, is (no doubt) implyed; A giving an accompt of our ſelves,

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in relation to our conditions, (*viz.*) What we have been? What we have done? How we have demeaned our ſelves in our conditions? What Glory we have brought to God? What Good we have done to others? We read, *Mat.* 25. *There were Talents delivered, and the Maſter called his ſervants to an account, how they had uſed, and improved thoſe Talents*? Some make theſe Talents to be of five ſorts.

1. Thoſe of Nature, (*viz.*) The Members of the Body, and Faculties of the Mind.
2. Wealth,
3. Authority; as Power, and Offices.
4. Knowledg; as Arts, and Sciences.
5. Grace.

So then, the outward things of a proſperous condition, are things to be accounted for, and then they become evil to a man, when they cauſe him to forget his accompt. Remember; We are accomptable to God, for whatſoever we have from God. The World is but God's great Family, He is the Great Houſe-holder, and every man muſt give an accompt to Him of the things wherewith he is intruſted. We read, *Luk.* 16. 2. How the unjuſt Steward is called to an accompt; *Give accompt of thy Stewardſhip, &c.* Every man is a Steward, and hath ſomewat, wherewith he is intruſted. Some have the things of the world, as Honour, Wealth, Authority, &c. Some have thoſe things that concern the Body, as Health, Strength, Beauty. Some have thoſe of the Mind, as Wiſdom, and Underſtanding. Now concerning All, there

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is a ſtrict Accompt to be given. *To whomſoever much is given, of them ſhall much be required.* God expects, our Duties ſhould be anſwerable to our Advantages that we have in a condition. We find the Altar that *Solomon* made, was four times bigger then that of *Moſes*; if you compare 2 *Chron.* 4. 1. with *Exod.* 27. 1. *Moſes* his Altar was, five Cubits long, and five Cubits broad; but *Solomons* Altar, was twenty Cubits long, and twenty Cubits broad, Now what is the reaſon of the difference? Surely this, *Moſes* was in an unſettled condition, but *Solomon* in a peaceable and flouriſhing Eſtate. And God expects, that our duties and ſervices ſhould be anſwerable to our worldly advantages. Let me tell you, this conſideration of an accompt you have to give, will keep you humble in a proſperous condition; will put you upon improving the things of your condition, for the glory of God, the good of others, and your own benefit; conſidering, they are things you are to give an Accompt of.

Thus for the ſecond thing, whereby a Judgment is to be made of a Proſperous Condition, Whether it be good for a man in this Life.

III. Then is Proſperity good for a man in this life, When it doth not make him to forget the Afflictions of *Joſeph*. It is then Evil, when our Proſperity makes us to forget thoſe that are in Adverſity. The Lord ſpeaketh of ſuch, *Amos* 6. 1. *They were at eaſe in Sion*; ver. 4. *They did lie upon beds of Ivory. They did eat the Lambs out of the Flock: They did Chaunt to the ſound of the Viol,* (they had their Muſick too.) *Ver.* 6. *They drank Wine in Bowls,* (they

(they had their Wine too, and that in Abundance.) *And they did Anoint themſelves with the chief Oyntments*, (they had their precious Oyntments, ſo that nothing was wanting.) Now, What is their Sin all this while? Why this, *They were not grieved for the Afflictions of Joſeph.* This was their Sin; Their Proſperity had taken away the ſympathy, and fellow-feeling they ought to have had of *Joſeph's* Afflictions. Their Fulneſs, made them to forget his Wants. Let me tell you, Proſperity is evil for a man, when it makes him forget the Afflictions of others. It was Evil for thoſe, That they were at *eaſe in Sion*; and, that they had *their Ivory Beds to lie upon*, and *their Lambs and Calves to feed on*; and *their Muſick to delight them in*; but were not *mindful of Joſephs Afflictions:* And therefore ſee how they are threatned, *ver.* 7. *They ſhall go captive with the firſt that go captive*: i. e. God would firſt fall upon them. It is ſaid of *Dives*, *Luke* 16. 19. That he was *cloathed in Purple, and fared Deliciouſly every day*: But *Lazarus* could not partake of ſo much, as the *crumbs that fell from his Table.* We may ſafely conclude, That, that mans Abundance is naught for him, that makes him to forget the Wants of others: That, that mans Proſperity is naught for him, that makes him to forget the Afflictions of others: That, that mans Eaſe is evil for him, that makes him to forget the Troubles, and Diſquiets of others. *Heb.* 13. 3. The Apoſtle chargeth them, that they ſhould *remember thoſe that are in Bonds, as if they were bound with them.* q. d. Though you are at Liberty, yet let not your Liberty deſtroy that ſympathy, and fellow-feeling, you ought to have of your brethrens Bonds, and

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Miſeries. This ſympathy the Apoſtle calleth for, *Rom.* 12. 15. *Rejoyce with them that rejoyce, and weep with them that weep.* q. d. What ever a mans particular condition is, It ſhould not hinder him from ſympathiſing with others in their conditions. *Rejoyce with them that rejoyce.* As if he ſhould ſay, It may be your particular condition is Sad, and you have cauſe to Weep, in reſpect of your own particular; yet if it go well with the Publick, and the people of God in general, You ought to rejoyce in their rejoycings. *And then* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *weep with them that weep.* q. d. It may be, your particular condition may be a Rejoycing-condition, nothing aileth you, you want for nothing; Yet, if the Church, and People of God, be in a ſad condition; You are to Weep with them. *Job* telleth us, he did ſo in the dayes of his Proſperity, *Job* 30. 25. *Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my Soul grieved for the Poor?* This he did, when he had no cauſe to Weep in relation to himſelf, his condition being a Rejoycing condition. You may ſee, how, in the height of his proſperity, he did ſympathize with thoſe that were in Affliction, *Chap.* 29. *ver.* 6, 12, 13, 15, 16.

To cloſe this, Let our Condition be never ſo Proſperous, we ought to Bleed in others Wounds, and to be Afflicted in all, wherein they are Afflicted.

Thus I have finiſhed the Firſt thing, *viz.* How a man may know, Whether a Proſperous condition be Good for him in this Life.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

I Now come to shew you, How a man may make a Judgment of an Adverse and an Afflicted condition; whether it be good for him in this life. For let me tell you, That as it is not good for all, that they have Prosperity; so neither is it good for all, that they are Afflicted.

Now, that you may know, whether an Afflicted condition be good for you, Consider this.

I. In General, I shall mind you of what I have before said, *(viz.)* That he that will make a judgment of his condition, must first make a judgment of himself. So that, to you that are in an Afflicted condition, I have two questions to put.

1. What you do in your condition?
2. What you make of your condition?

1. When God puts you into an Afflicted condition, What do you do in that condition? What is your carriage, and behaviour in the condition? Is it such, as becometh such providences and dispensations? Doth your behaviour become your condition?

Quest. You will ask, What is a man to do in an Afflicted condition, that he may be able to make a judgment of it, Whether it be good for him?

Answ. Do you do the work of your condition, and

and perform the duties of your condition? Then it is good for you.

Queſt. But then you will ask, What is the work, and what are the duties, that he is to do in an Afflicted condition?

Anſw. I ſhall ſhew you that, in ſome Particulars.

1. This he is to do, To endeavour the finding out of this, (*viz.*) What every Affliction comes in order to. When God putteth us into an Afflicted condition, it is in order to ſomewhat; and it is our duty, to ſearch out the mind and meaning of God in it. Some there are, that walk up and down (as I may ſay) in that condition, without ever inquiring, For what end it is they are Afflicted. As thoſe, *Iſa.* 5. 12. *They regarded not the work of the Lord, nor the operations of his Hands.* We muſt know, Afflictions are ſome of God's Operations. As it is God that bringeth a man and his comforts together, ſo a man and his croſſes; and every croſs cometh in order to ſomewhat. The Refiner kindleth his fire in his Furnace, in order to the refining of his Mettal. The Phyſitian giveth Phyſick in order to Health. Remember, Every Affliction, is in order to ſomewhat. It cometh with a meſſage from God. Now, our great work is to find out, what the Meſſage is, Affliction bringeth. When a man brings us Letters, we do not look on the back ſide only, and the ſuperſcription, but we look upon what is contained within, and what they import. So it is in reſpect of Afflictions, They bring us (as I may ſay) Letters from God, and a Meſſage, in order to ſomewhat. The thing we have to do, in an Affliction, is, not only to look upon the endorſment, and outſide of the Affliction; but

but we must break it up, and see what is written within. I told you formerly, We must go to God to know the meaning of a condition; *Dan.* 5. 5. We read of *a hand writing, and the King, and all were troubled, to know the meaning of what was witten.* In an Afflicted condition, there is a hand-writing upon it. The great thing we have to do, is, to enquire what is the meaning of it, and for what end the Affliction cometh. Thus it is with many in Affliction, they never inquire after the meaning of an Affliction, though it cometh with Letters and Messages; yet (as I may say) they put them in their pocket, as *Cæsar* did those Letters that forewarned him of his Death, when he was going to the Senate. *Plutarch*, telleth of the Governour of *Thebes*, when a Letter was sent to him from *Athens*, to discover a Plot that was against him, which was that night to be Executed; and the Messenger told him, that the Matter, contained in the Letter, was of high Concernment, and that he must read the Letter presently; His Answer was, *Weighty matters for to morrow*, and that night he was Slain. Thus, some never look into the Letters, that an Affliction bringeth us, and so despise the Affliction. *Lam.* 3. 40. the Afflicted are there directed, what to do in their condition, *Vers.* 39. *Why doth the living man complain?* This we should not do. But then see, what we should do, *Vers.* 40. *Let us search and try our wayes, &c.* This is some of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition. As the Lord spake to *Josuah*, when the men of *Israel* fled before the men of *Ai*, *Josuah* casteth himself down before the Lord, but the Lord bids him *rise up and search, for there was wickedness committed.* As you may read,

Joſh. 7. 10. Where the Lord ſheweth him, what was his duty, (*viz.*) *To ſearch out the ſin, for which that defeat came.*

2. This is another thing we are to do in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) To ſet in, and joyn with the Affliction, and to further it in the work for which it is ſent. We muſt do by Afflictions, as we do by Phyſick; we do not only take Phyſick, but we alſo joyn with it, to further it in it's working; we keep our Chamber, we take Broth, we forbear Studying and Working; and all this is to further it's working. Afflictions, are Phyſick that God giveth us: and then it is right, when we joyn with the Phyſick, and further and help it in it's Operation. When a Phyſitian adminiſtreth Phyſick, to a diſeaſed Patient, there are three things conſiderable, (*viz.*) The Phyſitian, the Patient, and the Diſeaſe. And where any two of theſe joyn together, down goeth the third. If the Phyſitian and the Patient joyn together, down goeth the Diſeaſe; if the Phyſitian and the Diſeaſe joyn together, down goeth the Patient; if the Patient and the Diſeaſe joyn together, down goeth the Phyſitian. So it is in reſpect of an Afflicted Condition: There is the Patient, the Phyſick, and the Diſeaſe. Now what is the reaſon, that the Phyſick of Affliction doth ſome perſons no good? Surely this, The Patient and the Diſeaſe joyn together. This the Prophet telleth us in the caſe of *Babylon*, *Jer.* 51. 9. *We would have healed Babylon, but ſhe would not be healed.* Where you find the Patient, taking part with the Diſeaſe. Thus, many in an Afflicted Condition, take part with the Diſeaſe, and not with the Phyſick. Affliction cometh, to ſet mens

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hearts and the world, men's hearts and their luſts, at greater diſtance; but here is the miſery, that moſt men take part with their Luſts, and not with their Afflictions, to further them in the work for which they are ſent. They do, in reſpect of the Rod, as they do in reſpect of the Word. When they ſhould take part with the Word, againſt their Sins; they take part with their Sins againſt the Word: So, when they ſhould take part with the Rod, againſt their Luſts, they take part with their Luſts, againſt the Rod. Thus did thoſe, *Iſa.* 1. 5. *Jer.* 5. 3. They joyned with the Diſeaſe, and did all they could to obſtruct the operation, and working of the Phyſick of Affliction. This (as I may ſay) is a croſſing our Croſſes, and afflicting our Afflictions; when we hinder them in their working. And this ſpeaks an Afflicted condition evil for a man in this life. It is ſaid of *Ahaz*, That *in his Affliction, he tranſgreſſed more and more*; This is naught.

3. This is another work of an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) to eye our Paſſions and Affections, more than our Afflictions. To have an eye upon our hearts, more then upon our hurts. Some, when they are in an Afflicted condition, ſpend all their time in poring upon their afflictions, as though that were the only work of their condition: whereas the great work they have to do, is, to eye their own hearts and ſpirits. Some look altogether without, when they ſhould look within. It is our own paſſions in an Afflicted condition, that are our greateſt Affliction. If the houſe within be kept dry, we need not much to care, what tempeſts are without. We many times complain of that, that is without us; when indeed, the cauſe is within us. As we ſee it

is with a ſick man, he complaineth of the uneaſineſs of the Stool he ſits upon, of the Bed he lieth upon, of the unſavorineſs of the Meat he eats; when the cauſe is inward. Were but his ill-humours removed, and purged away, the ſame Stool, and Bed, and Meat, would content him. When God puts men into an Afflicted condition, the reaſon why to ſome it is ſo troubleſome, is, from within, from their own ſpirits and diſpoſitions. If they could but ſubdue their paſſions, and bound their ſpirits, the condition would be well enough. Poring upon Afflictions, is like a mans poring upon rough and tempeſtuous Waters, which makes his head giddy, and himſelf Sea-ſick: So it is with ſome, they do but diſtemper themſelves, by looking altogether upon their Afflictions. Thus it was with *Job*, (*Job* 2.) You find him poring upon his *Afflictions*. And then ſee what the effect was, *Chap.* 3. *he opened his mouth, and fell a curſing the day of his birth*. Satan indeed thought to make him fall a curſing his God, but he was deceived; yet he fell to curſing the day of his birth, which was too-much. The great work a Governour of a City hath to do, when he heareth that the Country about him are up in Arms againſt him, is, to look to the Town within, to ſee that there be no tumults and riſings within. It is good for us in a day of Affliction, to look to this, that our paſſions do not raiſe a Mutiny. It was the ſaying of a Heathen, *Intus ſi recte, ne labores*, Thou need'ſt not trouble thy ſelf, if all be well within.

4. This is another work of an Afflicted Condition, (*viz.*) To eye our Sins, more than our Sufferings and Afflictions. Many in an Afflicted condition,

tion, eye their Afflictions, but not their Sins. They look upon what God doth againſt them, but conſider not, what they have done againſt Him; which if they did, it would make them complain more of their ſins, then of their ſorrows. It would turn their tears into another Channel; and cauſe them to ſpend thoſe tears upon their Sins, that they ſpend upon Afflictions. *Lam.* 3. 39. *Why doth the living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins?* In their Afflicted Condition, they were full of complaints, as we ſee, *Verſ.* 2, 3. *&c.* But here the Prophet giveth a check to them, *q. d.* We complain of our Afflictions; our eyes are altogether upon our Sufferings; Oh, but conſider, *Man ſuffereth for his Sin.* We ſhould eye our Sins, more then our Sufferings. *Pſal.* 51. 3. *David* ſaith, *his ſin was ever before him.* It is thus with ſome in an Afflicted Condition, that their Sufferings are ever before them, and not their Sins. When God Afflicts them, they can ſay, We are the perſons that feel Affliction from God: but conſider not, how they have ſinned againſt God. The good of the conſideration of our ſins in an Afflicted Condition, hath theſe benefits attending it.

1. It will make us Juſtify God in all our Afflictions. *To acknowledg that all his waves are equal, and that he is righteous in all that he hath brought upon us,* Dan. 9. 14. There is an expreſſion of *Eliphaz,* Job 4 17. *Shall mortal man be juſt with God?* There is a principle of pride in every man by nature, which is apt to ſhew it ſelf in the loweſt condition: ſo that we are apt to have better thoughts of our ſelves, then of God himſelf; and to

think, We are more juſt then God, when he layeth Affliction on us. Thus thoſe, *Ezek.* 33. 20. They ſaid, *The way of the Lord was unequal.* It was from looking only upon His wayes, and dealings with them, without conſidering their own wayes, and how They had dealt with him.

2. As it will help us to clear Gods Juſtice, ſo to admire his Mercy, in that he doth puniſh and afflict us, leſs then our iniquities do deſerve. As the confeſſion is, *Ezra* 9. 13. They had been in captivity 70. years, and yet though their captivity were long, they ſaw cauſe why they ſhould admire the Mercy of God towards them. Looking upon their ſins, they ſaw their Sufferings were leſs then they did deſerve.

3. This will help us to Adore the Wiſdom of God, in making Afflictions to become cures of, and remedies againſt, Sin. Afflictions at firſt came in as puniſhments for ſin. While we look only upon our Afflictions, we diſcern not the wiſdom of God in ſending them, and ordering them for our good; but when we eye our Sins, as well as our Afflictions, then we find, they are ſent to cure the Soul of ſome diſeaſe, as pride, and worldlineſs, &c. This will put a man upon putting this queſtion to himſelf, Doth not this Affliction come to cure, and kill my corruptions? Hath not the Lord ſent it to take me off the creature, and to imbitter it more to me? Hath not God done this to cure the Tympany of Pride, or the Dropſy of Covetouſneſs, or ſome Creature-Surfet? And hereupon a man falls upon admiring, and adoring the Wiſdom of God, in making Afflictions, Cures for our Corruptions.

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4. Eying Sins as well as Afflictions, will help us to poſſeſs our Souls in patience, and to ſuppreſs all riſings and ſmoakings of paſſion, to which we are ſubject in a day of Affliction. And this it will do, by giving us to ſee that our Afflictions are leſs then our iniquities do deſerve; and then there is great reaſon we ſhould bear them patiently, when we know we have deſerved greater. Why ſhould he not patiently endure the akeing of teeth, that knowes he hath deſerved the gnaſhing of teeth? and the burning of a feaver, when he knoweth he hath deſerved Burning in Hell? This will help to make us patient, when we loſe a comfort, (*viz.*) the conſideration of this, that we have forfeited all our comforts, and deſerve to be deprived of all.

5. Eying our Sins as well as our Afflictions, will make the burthen of Affliction much the eaſier, and leighter. What is the cauſe that to ſome, Afflictions are ſo heavy? It is, becauſe their ſin is ſo leight to them. Remember this, The heavier we find our Sins to be, the higher we ſhall find our Afflictions to be. Affliction muſt needs be heavy to thoſe, who eye nothing but Affliction. When we compare Evils of Suffering, with Evils of Sinning, we ſhall find them to be leight, although they be never ſo great. The reaſon why many complain of the burthen of their Affliction, is, becauſe Sin is no burthen to them. VVhere Sin is found to be heavy, Affliction will be found to be leight.

Thus for the fourth thing we have to do in an Afflicted condition.

5. We are in an Afflicted Condition to do this, (*viz.*) To keep our hearts open, and enlarged, in the midſt of outward ſtraitnings. Afflictions are ſtraitnings. As God dealeth with Nations, *Job* 12. 23. *He enlargeth them, and ſtraitneth them again.* So he dealeth oftentimes with particular perſons. And afflictions are their ſtraitnings. God bindeth up the face of our Comforts. As the expreſſion is in *Job*, that *by the froſt, he bindeth up the face of the waters*: So by the Froſt of Affliction, he bindeth up the face of our Comforts. Our work then is, To keep our hearts thawed, and open, when our outwards are as it were Frozen up. It is our work to ſee, That in the midſt of our outward ſtraitnings, our hearts be not ſtraitned towards God. It muſt be our work to keep our hearts open, when the Lord ſhuts us up by Affliction. Gods Afflicting, is called Gods ſhutting up, *Deut.* 32. 30. *Except the Lord had ſhut them up.* Sometimes a man and his comforts walke together. God ſometimes turns a man looſe among his Comforts, to walk at large in the enjoyment of them. And then ſometimes the Lord ſeparates between a man and his comforts, and buildeth a wall between them, that they cannot come at one another. Thus the Church complaineth, *Lam.* 3. 17. *Thou haſt removed my ſoul far from peace.* And again, *Lam.* 3. 5. *He hath builded againſt me, and compaſſed me about with gall and travel.* And *Verſ.* 7. *He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out.* Here the Church complaineth of her ſhuttings up by Affliction. There is a double hedg that God makes about a man, (*viz.*) an hedg of Protection, that no Evil can come

come at him; (Thus he did about *Job.*) And then a hedg of Affliction, that no Good can come at a man, *This is a hedg of Thorns.* Thus the Church complaineth, *Lam.* 3. 9. *He hath enclosed my wayes with hewen stone.* She was shut up with such a Wall which speaks strong and impregnable Afflictions. Now the work we have to do, is, To see that in the mid'st of our shuttings up, our hearts be not shut up towards God. *Jam.* 5. 13. *If any be Afflicted, let him pray.* Where the Apostle sheweth what is to be our work in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) Prayer. Several Conditions, have their several Duties. In Prosperity, we are to give Thanks; in Adversity, we are to Pray. *Eliphaz* charged *Job*, Job 15. 4. *That in the day of his Affliction, he did restrain prayer before God*; That he had inward restraints, when he was under outward restraints. It is our work in an Afflicted Condition, to watch against that. Prayer is the Duty that is proper for an Afflicted Condition, and that suits with such providences. And this is some of the work we are to do in that condition, (*viz.*) to Pray. We read, *Isa.* 26. 16. *In trouble they have visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.* It is *Calvin*'s opinion, that there the Prophet sheweth, what was the behaviour of Gods People, and what they did in the day of their affliction and trouble, (*viz.*) they did Visit the Lord; and so shewed the confidence they had in God. *q. d.* Lord, whereas Afflictions drive others from thee, and set them at a further distance; yet thy people draw nearer to thee, and seek the more after thee. Here is the work in an Afflicted Condition,

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To visit God, and to poure out a Prayer before Him. Afflictions are God's Visitations, and when God visiteth us with his Afflictions, we should visit Him with our Supplications. When He poureth forth our Comforts, and emptieth us of them, (for so God's Afflicting is called, a pouring out) it's then our Duty to pour out a Prayer before Him. *David* made this the work of his condition, *Psal.* 142. 2. *I poured out my complaint before him, I shewed him my trouble.* So *Psal.* 18. 6. *In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cryed to my God.* And this the Lord calleth for, as that which we are to do in an Afflicted condition. *Psal.* 50. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble.* It is some ease to us, when a trouble falls upon us, that we have some friend to repair to, into whose bosom we may pour out our complaints. This is the great Privileg, that in an Afflicted condition we have a God to go to; to whom we may make known our condition, and shew Him our trouble, as *David* did, *Psal.* 142. 2. In that condition, it is one great thing we have to do, to go to God, to begg of Him what we need for the condition: *viz.* Shoulders of Patience for our Burthens, and a gracious Improvement of our Conditions. Christians, you must know, an Afflicted condition is then good for you, when your hearts are kept open, when you have inward Enlargements, in the mid'st of your outward straitnings.

6. The work of an Afflicted Condition, is this, *viz.* To keep the Ear open to Counsel and Instruction. Some there are, so taken up with the thoughts of their Condition, that they will not

not hearken to Counſel. As *Marius* the Romane ſaid, *He could not hearken to the Laws, for the ratling and noyſe of Armes.* So the noyſe of Troubles, will not ſuffer ſome, to hearken to the voice of Counſel. And ſo *David* confeſſeth that it was his caſe, *Pſal.* 77. 2. *His Soul refuſed comfort.* Elihu, *Job* 36. 8. ſheweth how it is with Godly men when they are in Affliction. And then *Verſ.* 10. *He openeth their ear to Diſcipline.* We muſt know, Sathan is a great Enemy to the doing the work of our Condition; he endeavours to make us turn our Conditions into Sin, and not into Duty. He doth all he can, to ſtop our Ears againſt hearing Counſel and Inſtruction. Remember; when you are in Affliction, there cometh ſome Inſtruction with it. Now Satan endeavours to open the Eye, but to ſtop the Ear; he keeps the Eye open, to look upon the Affliction; but he keeps the Ear ſhut, and ſtopeth it, that it may not hearken unto the Inſtruction. The beſt way in an Afflicted Condition, is to keep the Eyes ſhut, and the Ear open. Not ſo much to look upon the Affliction, as to hear Inſtruction. *Micah* 6. 9. *Hear ye the Rod.* He doth not ſay, See ye the Rod, *but, hear ye the Rod.* When men are under the Rod, their eyes are open enough to ſee the Rod; they can point to the Affliction, and ſhew what it is. But the great thing they are to do, is to hear the Rod. The Rod hath a Voice, which ſhould be hearkened to. When an Affliction comes, it comes (as I told you before) with ſome Meſſage from God; It comes with ſome Inſtruction, and that we are to hearken to: We ſhould hear

what

what God will ſpeak, as *David* ſaid in another caſe, *Pſal.* 85. 8. When we ſee a flaſh of Lightning, we then prepare our Ears to hear a clap of Thunder. When we ſee the Affliction, we ſhould have our Ears open, to hearken to what followeth. We read of *Eliah*, when he was in the mouth of the Cave, 1 *King.* 19. 12. *There came a ſtrong Wind that brake the Mountains; After the Wind came an Earth-quake; After the Earth-quake, came a Fire; After the Fire, came a ſoft ſtill Voice.* Remember, after the noyſe of Afflictions, there comes a Voice; and we ſhould hearken to that Voice. *Pſal.* 94. 12. it is ſaid, *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, and teacheſt him out of thy Law.* The happineſs of a man lieth not in his being chaſtened, but in his being taught and inſtructed by his Chaſtiſement. A mute and dumb Affliction is Evil for a man; and it is onr deafneſs, that maketh the Affliction dumb, when a man heareth not the Affliction ſpeak. So then, in an Afflicted Condition, we are to hearken to what God ſaith, as well ſee as to what God doth.

7. Another work of an Afflicted Condition, is this, (*viz.*) Framing the heart to a pious Submiſſion. To get the heart into a ſubmitting Frame. And this not only out of Neceſſity, but out of Duty. It is excellent, when we can bring our Hearts to a quiet Submiſſion to the Will of God, in all theſe Providences and Diſpenſations. It muſt not be onely a Neceſſary Submiſſion. Such a Submiſſion is this, When a man parteth with a Comfort upon this conſideration; If God will take it away, I cannot help it;

it; I am content to part with it, since it cannot be otherwise. Thus they submit to their Condition, and yield to the parting with a Comfort, when they see they can keep it no longer. And this is that Submission that some rest in, and think it sufficient to say, There is no remedy. But now there is another Submission that hath more of Grace in it. And that is, when God calleth for a Comfort from us, there is free Resignation of it up to God. As we read of *Abraham*, When God called for *Isaack*, he presently resigned him up to Him. And this Submission proceedeth from Faith, which works a Christian to the denying of himself, and to a complying with God in that, that is seemingly contrary to his own desires and content. Thus we read, *Heb.* 11. how *Abraham*, by Faith, offered up his only begotten Son. By a hand of Faith he presents again to God, That Blessing he received from Him. Faith teacheth a man to receive a Mercy from God, and to be thankful; and to part again with it, and to be content: And this not out of necessity, because they can keep it no longer, but there is a free resigning of it up to God. Consider, the difference between these Submissions, is such, as is between the death's and ends of men. Some men, when they see they must dye, and that there is no remedy, do yield out of necessity; and so their Soul's are as it were taken from them. As the expression in the Gospel is, *Thou fool, this night shall thy Soul be taken from thee.* Whereas a Godly man, makes his Soul a Free-will-Offering to God. As our Saviour did his, *Father into thy hands*

hands I commend my Spirit. And as *Stephen* did his, *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.* It is said, *Prov.* 14. 32. *The Wicked is driven away in his Wickedness.* (i. e.) He is thrust, and forced out of the world, whether he will or not. But the Righteous hath hope in his Death; and that hope makes him to Resigne, and give up his Soul to God: As we read of giving up the Ghost.

8. This is another work we have to do in an Afflicted Condition, (*viz.*) To lay to heart the Affliction. When God puts a man into an Afflicted Condition, This is one thing God expects from him, *Eccles.* 7. 14. *In the day of Adversity consider.* In *Isa.* 42. 25. the Prophet complaineth of *Jacob*, That when God poured out upon him the Fury of his Anger, and the Strength of Battle: And it had set him on Fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he layed it not to heart. According to the Original, it is thus, *He did not put it upon his heart.* It is an Hebrew Phrase, and notes diligent consideration of Affliction. Now that you may not be mistaken about this, you must know, There is a double laying to heart of an Affliction.

1. Carnal, sinful and hurtful.
2. Spiritual, holy and helpful.

1. There is a Sinful laying of Afflictions to heart. When a man takes those burthens that lye upon his outwards, (*viz.*) His Person, Estate, &c. and layeth them as a burthen upon his

his Spirit; whereby a man troubles himself, when God troubles him. When he layeth his troubles without, so to heart, as to trouble himself within; this is Evil. This is forbid, *John* 14. 1. *Let not your hearts be troubled.* The word in the Original, signifieth such a trouble, as is in water when the mud is stirred up; or as the Sea is, when it is troubled with a Storm or Tempest. As we read in Scripture of the troubled Sea, that it's Waters cast forth Mire and Dirt. It also signifieth such a trouble as is in an Army, when it is Routed and Disordered; there is nothing but Fear, and Distraction, and Confusion. So saith our Saviour, *Let not your hearts be troubled.* (i. e.) Take heed of so laying your troubles to heart, as to trouble your Hearts; to distemper your Affections, and so to blind the Judgement, that you can see and discern things no better, then a man can in muddy water. This laying of Afflictions to heart is unlawful; when they are layed to heart, to disquiet and distemper the Heart, and to raise a Storm in the Soul, to make it a troubled Sea; casting forth nothing but the mud of impatiency and discontent. Take you a glass of water that hath some mud in it, and let it stand still, the mud settleth at the bottom, and the water above is clear; but shake this water, and then the mud ariseth, and there is confusion; and the water that before was clear, becometh muddy. So it is with our hearts and affections, there is mud at the bottom, and when they come to be stirred by Affliction, then the mud ariseth. This we should take heed of, of laying Afflictions so to heart, as to stir up

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the mud of impatiency and diſcontent.

2. There is a laying of Afflictions to heart, that is Spiritual, holy and helpful; This is a laying them to heart, not for the troubling, but for the bettering the heart. Not for the making of the Spirit more Diſtempered, Impatient, Weak, and unfit for Duty; but for the making of it more Holy, and Humble, and Submiſſive; this is a right laying of Afflictions to heart. It is then right, when there is an applying of the heart to the Affliction; to find out what uſe and benefit may be made of it. When we lay the Affliction to the heart, not to diſtemper it, but, as a plaiſter, to heal the diſeaſes and diſtempers of it; (*viz.*) to heal it's Pride, and Worldlineſs, and Vanity, &c. It ſhould be with us, in conſidering of, and laying Afflictions to heart, as with the Bee which alights on a Flower, and leaves it not till ſhe hath made ſomething out of it; even out of the very bloſſom of a Thiſtle, ſhe will get ſomewhat. So it ſhould be, in reſpect of an Afflicted Condition, There ſhould be ſuch an application of the heart to it, as to get ſomewhat out of it, for the bettering of the heart. *Solomon* telleth us, *Eccleſ.* 7. 2. *It is better to go to the Houſe of Mourning, then to the Houſe of Feaſting: For this is the end of all fleſh, and the living will lay it to his heart.* Laying to heart the ends of others, is the making ſomewhat out of them, that is good and profitable for our ſelves. It is our Duty to lay to heart the Afflictions of others, much more our own. The Lord telleth *Babylon*, Iſa. 47. 7. That ſhe ſaid, *She ſhould be a Lady for ever, and did*

not

not lay the Afflictions of his people to heart. As ſhe laid them not to heart by way of Sympathy, ſo not by way of Improvement. So then, to cloſe this, Laying afflictions to heart, ſtands in this, In having Impreſſions made upon our Spirits, ſuitable to the Providence and the Diſpenſation. We read of *Ahaz*, That *in his Affliction he tranſgreſſed more and more*, 2Chron.28.19. God brought *Judah* low, and *Ahaz* was put to his ſhifts; he gave gifts to the King of *Aſſyria*, yet he helped him not. And *Verſe* 22. *In the time of his diſtreſs, he did treſpaſs more againſt the Lord.* And it is ſaid, *This is that King Ahaz!* The meaning is, That the Affliction did not make an Impreſſion upon his heart, ſuitable to the Providence and Diſpenſation. To cloſe this, It is then right, when our Hearts anſwer to Providences, in laying Afflictions ſo to heart, as to make ſuitable Impreſſions.

9. This is ſome of the work we have to do in an Afflicted Condition; We are patiently to expect and wait upon God; Waiting is one of our Duties in an Afflicted Condition. We are to wait upon God for comfortable Supports in it, and a ſeaſonable Deliverance out of it; *Iſa.* 8. 17. *I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his Face from the houſe of Jacob.* The Prophet reſolved to walk dutifully, when God walked ſtrangely. We ſhall find in an Afflicted condition, This is the Duty, that is Commanded, Commended, and Practiſed by the Saints in that Condition. It is commanded, *Pſal.* 27. 14. *Wait on the Lord and he ſhall ſtrengthen thy heart; wait I ſay on the Lord.* Lam. 3. 26. *It is good that a man ſhould hope, and*

quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord. It is ſpoken there in reference to an Afflicted Condition. And ſo we find the Godly have made it their work in that condition to wait. *David* telleth us, *He waited patiently for the Lord.* Conſider, Waiting is an Act of Patience drawn-out. The Scripture hath two Expreſſions concerning it,

viz. { Waiting on God. / Waiting for God.

Waiting on Him for Comfort in Affliction; And waiting for Him, to deliver out of Affliction. Thus did the people of God, *Iſa.* 25. 9. *Lo, This is the Lord, we have waited for him, and he will ſave us.* This is ſome of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) To wait on God, and to wait for God. Affliction is apt to make us ſhort-breath'd. To make us weary not only *in* waiting, but weary *of* waiting. This we ſhould look to, That though we are weary in waiting, yet not to be weary of waiting. It was the ſaying of that wicked King of *Iſrael*, 2 King. 6. 33. *This evil is of the Lord, why ſhould I wait any longer?* The great work we have to do in an Afflicted Condition, is, To wait upon God. I have told you before, It is God that brings a man and his Afflictions together; and as it is He that openeth a fore-door, to let a man into that condition, ſo it is He that muſt make a back-door, to let a man out. There are many that would make a back-door of their own; but God is wiſer then they, and knows how to deliver them. *Job* 14. 14.

All

All the dayes (ſaith he) *of my appointed time, will I wait till my change come.* And this is ſome of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) To wait till our change come. Now waiting upon God in Affliction, ſtandeth in theſe two things,

1. In a Silence of Spirit. A waiting Spirit is a Silent Spirit, it makes no Noyſe or Clamour, *Lam.* 3. 26. *It will wait quietly for the Salvation of God.* Pſal. 62. 1. *My Soul, wait thou upon God.* According to the Original, it is, *Be Silent before God.* Where there is waiting upon God, there is no murmuring; There are no impatient expreſſions; There is a deep ſilence of the Soul in reſpect of paſſion, though not in reſpect of Prayer. There is a ſpeaking to God, but not againſt God. A waiting Soul, is a praying, but not a paſſionate Soul. Remember; When God's hand is upon our Backs, our hands ſhould be upon our Mouths.
2. In a ſweet Submiſſion of Spirit to God, waiting God's time for Deliverance. There is our time, and there is God's time. As Chriſt told *Mary*, *Mine hour is not yet come.* This is Waiting, to ſtay the Lords leiſure, and to wait His time. It was wickedly ſpoken by that King of *Iſrael*, Who ſaid, *This evil is of the Lord, why ſhould I wait any longer?* Whereas, on the contrary, he ſhould have argued thus, This evil being of the Lord, therefore there is reaſon I ſhould wait.

10. Another work of an Afflicted Condition, is this, To make all out of God, that we need in that condition. Living on God, and living by Faith, are ſome of the great Duties that concern that Condition, *Iſa.* 50. 10. *Is there any that walketh in darkneſs and hath no light? Let him ſtay himſelf upon his God.* While we are in a proſperous condition, we have Creature-props and ſtayes, and we are too apt to ſtay our ſelves upon them: And therefore the Lord pulleth them away, to make us ſtay our ſelves upon Him. As the Lord ſpeaks, *Iſa.* 3. 1. *Behold, I take away the ſtay and the ſtaff,* &c. The Church, in the day of her Affliction, made all out of God, *Mic.* 7. 8. *Though I ſit in darkneſs, yet the Lord ſhall be a light about me.* Faith will help us to look upon God as an Univerſal Good. We know there are many particular things, and (as it were) pieces of comforts, that muſt concurr, to make a mans outward condition good. Our good here below, is a Compounded good; A Wife is a part, and Children a part, and Riches a part, and Health a part, *&c.* But a man by an Eye of Faith, ſeeth that God is all this, and more. As *Elkanah* told *Hannah, Am not I better to thee then ten Sons?* So the Lord is more to a Chriſtian, then all worldly Enjoyments. The things of the world (though enjoyed in the greateſt meaſure) can never make a Condition comfortable without God: But the enjoyment of God, will make a condition comfortable without them. It was *Davids* courſe, to place God as his Strength, where greateſt danger was: *The Lord* (ſaith he) *is the ſtrength of my life:* His

Life

Life was in greateſt danger: And it was his way, to fetch ſupplies from God in his greateſt wants. When he wanted a Rock, a Fortreſs, a Comforter, a Deliverer; he made the Lord all theſe. And this is ſome of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition.

Thus we have finiſhed the Firſt thing, by which a man is to make a judgment of an Afflicted Condition; whether it be good for him in this life or not? (*viz.*) By conſidering what he doth in that condition.

CHAP. XII.

2 WE come now to ſhew you, that you are to make a judgment of your condition, by what you make of your condition, and what you have gained by it. The great Queſtion you are to put to your ſelves, is, Whether you are Spiritual gainers or loſers by your condition? The truth is this, Every Temporal condition is Evil for a man, by which he is a Spirituall loſer. In an Afflicted condition, all will confeſs they are Temporal loſers; They will tell you, they have loſt Houſes, and Eſtates, and Wife, and Children, and this, and the other Comfort: But the Queſtion is, Whether you are Spiritual gainers, by your temporal loſſes. I have told you before, An Afflicted condition, is a condition that may be improved to Spiritual advantages: Although it ſeemeth a barren condition, yet it is improveable. *Iſa.* 41. 19. *God ſaid, he would plant in the Wilderneſs, the Cedar, Shittah Tree, and the Myrtle Tree, &c.* He ſpeaks there of making the Wilderneſs Fruitful. An Afflicted condition, is a Wilderneſs-condition, and we ſhould ſee what Fruitfulneſs there is in it. It is ſometimes with conditions, according to what the Pſalmiſt ſpeaketh in another caſe, *Pſal.* 107. 34. *He turneth a fruitful land into barrenneſs.* And *Verſe* 35. *He turneth a Wilderneſs into Springs of Water.*

Water. There are ſome conditions, that ſeem outwardly fruitful, (*viz.*) Proſperous conditions: And theſe ſometimes are turned into barrenneſs; ſome are ſpiritually barren in that condition. Some there are, whoſe condition is a Wilderneſs, and yet this condition is turned into ſprings of water, and is made fruitful. Chriſtians ſhould ſee, Whether they are fruitful in the land of their Affliction. You have a paſſage, in *Gen.* 41. 52. That *Joſeph* called his Sons Name *Ephraim*, *For* (ſaith he) *God hath made me fruitful in the land of my Affliction.* Chriſtians ſhould look, what fruit their Afflicted condition beareth, and what they gather from it. It is a condition planted with Thorns and Thiſtles; but I have told you before, That there is a Spiritual Art, of gathering Figgs, from theſe Thorns; and Grapes, from theſe Thiſtles. God, in Afflicting, intends our profit, and gain, and good, *Heb.* 12. 10. It is our work, to ſee whether we profit by Afflictions. We can never ſay, An Affliction is good for us, till we can ſay, This Affliction is for my profit. And, as *David* did, *It is good for me that I have been Afflicted.*

This having been ſpoken in General, I ſhall now come to ſhew you in ſome particulars, how you may know, Whether you are gainers by an Afflicted condition.

Before I come to ſpeak to them; You muſt conſider, under what Notions and Names, the Scripture preſenteth them to us: By which you may ſee, What is God's aime, and end, in ſending them. And wee ſhould ſee, whether the Affliction hath done that work upon us, that an-

ſwers to the Ends and Intentions of God, for which he ſent it. Now that will be diſcovered thus, by conſidering theſe things.

1. Affliction is God's Furnace, *Iſa.* 48. 10. *I have choſen thee in the Furnace of Affliction.* Iſa. 31. 9. When God Afflicted Jeruſalem, he is ſaid, *To have his Fire in Sion, and his Furnace in Jeruſalem.* Affliction is God's Fire and Furnace. Now, what is the Fire and Furnace to do? It is to Melt, and Try; and Refine, and Purify. Chriſtians, in an Afflicted Condition, are to ſee, Whether the Furnace hath done this work upon them? Whether it hath Purified and Refined them? They are to conſider, what they were when they went into the Furnace, and what they are when they come out. We read, *Zach.* 13 9. *God ſaith, he would bring a third part through the fire, and he would try them as Silver is tryed.* Job (*chap.* 23.10.) ſaith in his Afflicted Condition, *When he hath tryed me, I ſhall come forth like Gold.* (i. e.) Pure and Gliſtering. He ſhould come forth better then he went in. This is the great thing we have to do, to ſee whether we come better out of the Furnace of Affliction, then when we went in; whether we come forth like Gold. The Furnace doth two things.

It { 1. Melteth. 2. Refineth.

1. It melteth that, that is meltable; And we are to ſee, What melting work Affliction hath done upon us. Some are not melted, becauſe they

they are as ſtones in the Furnace. Caſt a ſtone into the Furnace, it goeth in a ſtone, and it comes forth a ſtone. It is heated, but it is not melted. There are many come out of an Affliction, the ſame they went in. It is ſaid of *Pharoah*, at the end of every Plague that befell him, That his heart was hardned. He went in hardned, and ſo he came out; he went a ſtone into the Furnace, and ſo he came forth. It is our great work in an Afflicted condition, to ſee how we come forth, to ſee whether Affliction melteth us. There is an expreſſion, *Pſal.* 107. 26. *Their hearts melted becauſe of trouble.* We ſhould ſee, Whether Afflictions do melt our hearts? Whether it hath melted a Proud Heart into Humility? An hard Heart into Softneſs? A Rebellious Heart into Obedience? *Ephraim* confeſſeth, Affliction wrought this work upon him, *Jer.* 31. 18. Thus you are to ſee, What Affliction hath wrought upon you by way of melting.

2. You are to ſee, What Affliction hath done by way of Refining and Purifying. That is the other work of the Furnace, *(viz.)* To Refine. It is to ſeparate the droſs from the Silver; and to take away impure mixtures. When you went into the Furnace you went in droſs, but do you come forth as Gold? Some come forth but droſs. The Lord ſpeaks of ſuch, *Jer.* 6. 29, 30. They went in droſs, and ſo they came out. *Verſ.* 29. *The Bellows are burnt, the Lead is conſumed in the fire, the Founder melteth in vain.* The Lord there ſpeaketh of Himſelf, as a Founder that hath taken much paines, to little purpoſe: He had burned his Bellows, but all was in vain, the wicked were

not

not taken away. *Verſ.* 28. *They were Braſs and Iron.* God looked that they ſhould have been Silver and Gold, when they were in the Furnace. Gods Furnace of Affliction, is, for a Tranſmutation of Metalls, to turn Iron and Braſs, into Silver and Gold: But they were baſe and corrupt ſtill. At beſt, they were but Reprobate Silver; As the Prophet ſtyles them, *Verſ.* 30. *Reprobate Silver ſhall men call them*: Or as it is in the Margin of your Bibles, *Refuſe Silver*; Such Silver, from which the droſs would not be ſeparated by the Fire of the Furnace of Affliction; ſo they came out of the Furnace as they went in. We read, *Ezeck.* 24. 12. *God had ſet Iſrael on the fire, but yet her great ſcum went not out of her.* It began to boyle up, but it did not boyle out. *Verſ.* 13. *They were not purged.* They came off the fire as they went on. The great work you have to do in an Afflicted condition, is, To ſee what Refining work Affliction hath done upon you.

2. Affliction is God's School. Now in a School, there is a Rod and a Book: The one for Correction, the other for Inſtruction. Thus it is in God's School of Affliction, *Pſal.* 94. 12. *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, and teacheſt out of thy Law.* Whom thou chaſteneſt, There is the Rod: And teacheſt out of thy Law, There is the Book. This we are to do in an Afflicted condition, To ſee what God's Rod hath made us to learn out of God's Book. The Rod cometh for two ends,

1. To drive ſomewhat out of us.
2. To drive ſomewhat into us.

1. The

1. The Rod cometh to drive ſomewhat out of us. *Solomon* telleth us, *Prov.* 22. 15. *Folly is bound* (or riveted) *in the heart of a Child, but the Rod of Correction drives it away.* The Rod is to whip Folly and Stubbornneſs out of a Child; and when it doth this work, then it is good. We are to ſee, What the Rod hath driven out of us. There is folly bound up in all our hearts, and we muſt ſee, Whether the Rod of Affliction hath driven it away. *Ephraim* makes this confeſſion, *Jer.* 31. 18. *Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed; I was as a Bullock accuſtomed to the yoak*, &c. There was an unruly and untamed ſpirit in *Ephraim*, but the Rod of Affliction ſubdued it: As he acknowledged, *Verſ.* 19. *Surely after I was turned, I Repented.* The Rod gave him a Turn, and he was Reformed by it. Our great Work in an Afflicted Condition, is, To ſee what the Rod hath driven out of us; And whether, when we were out of the way, it hath whipped us into the right way. *David* ſaith, *Pſal.* 119. 67. *Before he was Afflicted he went aſtray. David* was a Rambler till God whipped him. *But now I keep thy Precepts.* q. d. I was a very careleſs obſerver of thy Precepts, but now thy Rod hath whipped it out of me.

2. The Rod cometh to drive, and beat ſomewhat into us. It comes to ſet on Leſſons and Inſtructions. Correction cometh for this end, To ſet on Inſtruction. You have a paſſage of *Elihu*, Job 33. 16. Of God's ſpeaking once or twice, and man perceiveth it not. *Verſ.* 16. *Then he openeth the ears of men, and ſealeth their Inſtruction*: (*i. e.*) When men will not hear, God cometh

cometh with Afflictions, and openeth their ears, and ſetteth on his Inſtruction with a Witneſſe. God's Corrections, are to Seal his Inſtructions. Inſtructions many times make no impreſſion, till the Rod comes and Seals them, and puts the Stamp upon them. The queſtion we are to put to our ſelves in an Afflicted Condition, is, What Inſtruction the Affliction hath Sealed to us?

1. Can you ſay, The Rod of Affliction hath Sealed an Inſtruction to you concerning God, What he is? We read of *Manaſſeh*, 2 *Chron.* 33. 12. *When he was in Affliction, he beſought the Lord his God, and then (ſaith the Text) he knew that the Lord was God.* No doubt but he knew it before, but he heeded it not, till the Affliction came and Sealed the Inſtruction to him.

2. What Inſtructions hath Afflictions Sealed concerning your ſelves? Can you ſay, We have often heard, What a Proud, and Stubborn, and Perverſe-Creature, man is; *Like a Bullock unaccuſtomed to the Yoak.* Such a creature I my ſelf am, apt to forget my God, and to forget my ſelf: But alas! I took no notice of theſe Inſtructions. But now Affliction hath opened mine Ear, and Sealed this Inſtruction.

3. What Inſtructions hath Afflictions Sealed concerning the Creature? I have often been inſtructed of the Vanity of the Creature, of the Emptineſs that is in all worldly Comforts, of the Uncertainty that is in Riches, and all worldly Enjoyments: And have

have been called upon, to uſe all theſe things with weaned Affections, and right conſiderations of their Brevity, Mortality, Mutability. But theſe Inſtructions I heeded not in the day of my Proſperity. But now my Affliction hath Sealed theſe Inſtructions. I now ſee what the creature is, and what all worldly things are, (*viz.*) Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. When *Solon* the Wiſe, came to viſit *Cræſus* the Rich, *Cræſus* ſhewed him his Wealth, and asked him, Whether he thought him not the happieſt man living? *Solon* anſwered, *Nemo fælix ante obitum*; Thou mayeſt be unhappy for all this, before thou dieſt. *Cræſus* did then but laugh at what *Solon* ſaid. But afterwards, when he had loſt the Battle againſt *Cyrus*, and had his City taken, and was bound to a Gibbet over a great Pile of wood, to be burned in the ſight of the *Perſians*; He cryed out aloud, *O Solon, Solon!* *Cyrus* asked him the meaning of it; He anſwered, *That* Solon *had told him this before, but he believed him not.* We are to ſee, Whether Affliction hath Sealed this Inſtruction concerning the creature's vanity.

4. What Inſtructions hath Affliction Sealed concerning Sin? Can you ſay, I have been informed of the Evil of Sin, what a bitter thing it is, That though it be ſweet in the mouth, yet it will be Gall and Worm-wood in the end. Theſe Inſtructions I have often heard, but heeded them not. But now Affliction hath Sealed theſe Inſtructions. It hath given me to ſee, The Evil of Diſobedience,

dience, Pride, Covetouſneſſe, and of over-loving the Creature, &c.

5. What Inſtructions hath the Rod ſealed concerning Duty? I have heard, out of Gods Word, much concerning my Duty, What I ought to do; but I was a careleſs, and forgetful Hearer.

1. I have heard, it was my Duty, In a Good day, to prepare for Evil dayes. But this Inſtruction I heeded not. I could not believe there would be a change in my condition: But now Affliction hath ſealed this Inſtruction.

2. I have heard, that this was my Duty, To pity others in their Miſeries, and to have a ſellow-feeling of others Afflictions. But theſe I heeded not. I did not remember the Afflictions of *Joſeph*. I was not afflicted in the Afflictions of others: But now the Rod of Affliction hath ſealed that Inſtruction.

3. I have been Inſtructed concerning Obedience, *viz.* That it ſhould be cloſe, and conſcionable: But alaſs! I heeded not the Inſtruction: I was looſe, and formal, and took that liberty to my ſelf, that the Word did not allow. But now the Rod hath ſealed this Inſtruction; It hath taught me to be more ſtrict, and cloſe in my Obedience, as it did *David*, *Pſal.* 119. 71.

Thus

Thus we are to ſee, Whether the Rod of Affliction hath ſealed theſe Inſtructions, *Pſal.* 94. 12. *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, and teacheſt out of thy Law.* Then it is right, when with Affliction, and Correction, there goeth Inſtruction; and when the Rod of affliction ſealeth inſtructions out of the Law.

3. We have Affliction preſented to us under another Name and Notion, (*viz.*) That it is God's *Plough*, *Pſalm.* 129. 3. Every Inſtrument in Affliction, is God's *Plower:* And every Affliction is God's *Plough*, that makes Furrowes upon our Backs, our Eſtates, and Families. Now conſider, What is the work of the *Plough?* It is to break up the Ground, and to fit it for the Seed, that it may bring forth a Crop. Now, how ſhall we know it was good for the Land that it was Plowed? but by the Crop it brings forth. If it bring forth nothing but Weeds, or Bryars, or Thorns, we cannot ſay, That it was good for that Land, that it was Plowed. *Joh.* 15. 1. God is compared to a Husband-man. Now a Husband-man hath two things to look to.

{ 1. His Field.
{ 2. Vineyard.

For his Field, he hath a Plough: For his Vineyard, he hath a Pruning-knife. Afflictions are both theſe. 1. Af-

1. Afflictions are God's Plough for his Field; And whoever are the Inſtruments in Afflicting, they are but God's Plow-men. An Husband-man hath his day-labourers under him: So hath God, ſome that labour about the Ear, the Heart, and the Inward-man: And theſe are his Miniſters, 1 *Cor.* 3. 9. *We are labourers together with God; ye are God's Husbandry, or God's Tillage.* And then God hath another ſort, that deal about a mans outwards, and thoſe are, Such Inſtruments as he makes uſe of, in Afflicting. An Husband-man in his Field, hath ſome to Plow, and break up the Earth: And he hath ſome to Sow, and caſt abroad the Seed. Thoſe that Sow, are his Miniſters, who by their Preaching, caſt abroad the Seed, when the Plough of Affliction hath broken up the Ground. It is not the Husband-man's work, to be alwayes Plowing, he hath his time to be Sowing too. As you may ſee, *Iſa.* 28. 24. God's Afflicting, may well be compared to Plowing, and that in theſe reſpects.

1. Plowing altereth and changeth the face of the Earth. If you Plowe up a green Meadow, you alter the Face of it: It's Verdure, and Greenneſs, and Beauty is gone. The Plough turneth a pleaſant Meadow, into a fallow Field. Thus Affliction changeth the face of a mans condition. It turneth a *Naomi*, into a *Marah*, *Naomi* ſignifieth, pleaſant, and *Marah* bitter. *Ruth* 1. 20. It is ſaid, in *Mic.* 3. 12. *Sion ſhall be Plowed as a Field. Sion* had been as a beautiful Meadow, Fair, Green, and

and Pleaſant; But God by Afflicting her, would make her look like a Fallow-field. Thus, you find the change, God's Plough of Affliction, made in *Job's* condition: It quite altered the face of it. *Job* 29. 2, 3, 6, &c. he ſheweth you, how fair and flouriſhing his condition was, before God's Plough went over him: But *Chap.* 30. He telleth you, what a change it had made of the face of his condition.

2. The Plough overturneth the Earth, and layeth the bottom uppermoſt. It turneth that downward, that was upward, and that upward, that was downward. So doth Affliction, Where that Plough comes, it hideth that that was green, and turns it out of ſight, (*viz.*) our Comforts, and caſteth earth upon them. As the expreſſion is, *Iſa.* 24. 1. *Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty, he maketh it waſt, he turneth it upſide down.* This the Plough of Affliction doth when it cometh, It turneth our comforts and worldly enjoyments, upſide-down.

3. The Plough where it cometh, maketh furrows: And maketh ſuch marks and prints on the earth, that a man may know where the Plough hath gone: So that we can, for along time after ſay, This ground hath been Plowed. So Afflictions make furrows, and leave marks behind them, upon a mans Eſtate, and Body, and Family, and Relations; that one may ſay, Here hath the Plough of Affliction hath gone. Thus it did upon *Shiloh*, Jer. 7. 12. *Go ye to my place which was in Shiloh*, &c. *And ſee what I did to it, for the wickedneſs of my people Iſrael.* This was a long

time after God had inflicted his judgments upon *Shiloh*, yet she lay as a Fallow-field still.

The great work we have to do, is this, To see, What work the Plough of Affliction hath done. You must know, Plowing is a relative work; It is in order to some other, and some further thing, as to Sowing, and to Harvest. We are to see, Whether our Affliction have been followed with a fruitful Crop. I have told you before, The Plough of it self doth no good, there must be something else, or else there will be no Harvest. There must be Sowing as well as Plowing. This we are to do, to see, Whether we are Sowed, as well as Plowed. And to see, What Crop is brought forth, and groweth in those furrows of Affliction? Whether it be not weeds and hemlock, as the expression is, *Hos.* 10. 4.

4. We are to look upon Afflictions, as God's Physick, and as those Physical means and remedies, that God useth for the curing of our diseases. As Physitians have their wayes of curing corporal Diseases, by Diet-drinks, and Sweatings, and Purgations: So the Lord hath his Wayes and Means of curing our Spiritual Diseases. As there are diseases to which our bodies are subject, (*viz.*) Surfets, and Feavers, and Dropsies, and Consumptions; so there are the like in our Spirits. It is the saying of one, That there is no Beast on the Land, but it hath it's like in the Sea: So, there is no disease belonging to our Bodies, but our Souls are spiritually subject to. There is the Tympany of Pride, the Dropsy of Covetousness, the Consumption of Envy, the Feaver of Passion.

Paſſion: The Spirit hath it's Surfets and Diſtempers. Now, Afflictions are ſome of thoſe means and remedies God makes uſe of, for the curing theſe Diſeaſes. The great thing we are to enquire after, is, What work the Phyſick of Affliction hath wrought upon us.

1. Afflictions are God's Diet-drink. It is made up with Gall and Wormwood. So the Church telleth us, *Lam.* 3. 19. So *Iſa.* 30. 20. we read of the Bread of Affliction, and the Water of Affliction. *Pſal.* 80. 5. We read of the Bread of Tears, &c. Phyſitians give things to their Patients, that may not be toothſome, yet may be wholeſome. We are to ſee, What Operation this Diet-drink hath had upon us, Whether it hath weaned us from the world. There is a Diſeaſe Phyſitians call *Pica*, which is a deſire to feed upon Trash: As ſome Women and Children, will eat Earth, and Coales, and the Clay of Walls. Such a Diſeaſe we are all ſubject to, having a ſtrong appetite and deſire after low earthly things, too baſe for the Spirit to feed upon. Now can you ſay, This Diet-drink of Affliction hath cured you of this Diſeaſe?

2. Affliction is God's *Phlebotomy*, his blood-letting. God's Afflicting is His takeing ſome blood from us. And when God doth it, He doth it in the right Veine. When He takes away Riches, and Honour, &c. then he bloodeth us in one

Veine. When he taketh away Wife or Children, Then he letteth us blood in another Veine. We are to ſee, What good our Blood-letting hath done us, Whether it hath taken down our high Colour, and our high Looks? We are to ſee, Whether it hath taken away any of our corrupt Blood? Whether it hath cured our Rankneſs of Pride, and Feaveriſhneſs of Paſſion. There is an Expreſſion, *Iſa.* 17. 4. *That the glory of Jacob ſhould be made thin, and the fatneſs of his fleſh ſhould be made lean.* (i. e.) God would let them blood by His Afflictions, to cure their Pride, and all their other Spiritual Diſeaſes.

3. Afflictions are God's Purgations, To purge out of us Peccant and Malignant Humours. They come to purge out of us Pride, Covetouſneſs, &c. We are to ſee, VVhether Afflictions have purged us, not only by moving theſe corrupt humours, but by removing of them. *Iſa.* 27. 9. *By this ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.* This is our work, To ſee what ſinful humours affliction hath purged away. How many Purges hath God given to ſome by Afflictions, and yet they have not removed Obſtructions. Afflictions are to remove Obſtructions: to make way for the Word to come to the Heart. It comes to the Ear, but the work of Affliction, is, to make way for it to come to the Heart. The great Queſtion, we are to put to our ſelves, is this, VVhether Affliction, hath opened a way

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for Inſtruction to come to our Hearts? St. *Bernard* told a brother of his that was a Souldier, and a man of a Diſſolute and Prophane life; When he ſaw him ſleight the good Counſel he had given him, He clapt his hand on his ſide, and ſaid, *One day God will make way to this heart of yours, by ſome Spear or Launce.* (i. e.) He ſhould receive ſome Wound in the Warrs, and then he would think of his Admonitions: And ſo it fell out.

CHAP. XIII.

Queſt. SOme may ask, Since I know not what is good for me in this life, VVhat Counſel or Direction can you give me concerning Conditions, (*viz.*) for the chooſing or refuſing a condition; ſo that I may not do what is contrary the Will of God, and to my own good?

Anſw. For Anſwer to this, I ſhall give you in ſome Directions, with which I ſhall conclude this Subject, and they are of two ſorts.

Some { General. / Particular.

1. General. You muſt not be your own chooſers of conditions, but let God chooſe for you. As the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion is, *Pſal.* 47. 4. *He ſhall chooſe our inheritance for us.* It is good for us, not to be our own chooſers of conditions, but to let the Lord chooſe for us. It is an excellent thing, and that that ſpeaks much Submiſſion to the Will of God; When in reſpect of outward conditions, we can ſay, Lord, Thou ſhalt chooſe for me. There are many that are diſcontented if they may not be their own chooſers; And ſay, (as *Rachel* did concerning children) Give me this, or give me that, or elſe I dye.

dye. Herein is the pride of man ſeen, That he muſt have, what he would have, or elſe he thinks it not well, and is ready to charge God fooliſhly. Thus it was with *Jonah*, becauſe he could not have his will in the deſtruction of *Nineveh*, and in the enjoyment of his Gourd; he preſently flyeth out into paſſion againſt God himſelf: As you may read, *Jonah* 4. VVhen God repented of the evil concerning *Nineveh*, it diſpleaſed *Jonah* exceedingly, and he was very angry. And ſee, In a pett he would dye, *Verſ.* 3. *Take away my life from me, for it is better for me to dye then to live.* What was the cauſe of all this? *Jonah* could not have his will in the deſtruction of *Nineveh*; and ſo thought it was better to dye, then not to have his will: So far did paſſion tranſport him. And then concerning the Gourd, *Verſ.* 6. We read, how it ſprung up to ſhadow *Jonah*, and he was exceeding glad of the Gourd. But when the Gourd was ſmitten, and withered, *Jonah* was exceeding angry; And ſaith, *Verſ.* 7. *It is better for me to dye, then to live.* Yea, he proceeds ſo far, as when *Verſ.* 9. God asked him, VVhether he did well to be angry for the Gourd, as to anſwer, *I do well to be angry even to the death.* Now, what was the cauſe of all this? But only this, That *Jonah* could not have his own will, and be his own chooſer. So the great direction, is this, Let the Lord chooſe your condition for you, and let it be as the Lord will. VVe are apt to be our own chooſers, and this cauſeth much ſin and ſorrow. Thus we read of thoſe, in *Jer.* 42. After the death of *Gedaliah*, the Forces under *Johanah*, were in a great ſtrait,

VVhether they ſhould ſtay in the Land of *Judah*, or go into the Land of *Egypt*. They reſolved at firſt, the Lord ſhould chooſe their condition for them; And thereupon they come to the Prophet, to enquire of God what they ſhould do; And reſolved what ever Anſwer they had from God, whether it were Good, or whether it were Evil, they would hearken to it. As you may ſee, *Verſ.* 3, 5, 6. But we find, for all this, they reſolved to be their own chooſers, and to have their own wills: And the Prophet telleth them, That they diſſembled in their hearts, when they ſent him to enquire of the Lord. For when God had chooſen for them, and told them what He would have them do, *viz.* Not to go into *Egypt*, they would none of his choice, but into *Egypt* they would go. This is that we are to take heed of, of being our own chooſers of Conditions; but let the Lord chooſe for us. So take notice of theſe moving conſiderations, VVhy we ſhould make the Lord, the chooſer of our conditions, and not be our own chooſers.

1. Now in Goſpel-times, we are not under a Diſtinct Covenant for Temporalls as the *Jews* were. The Law was to the *Jews*, a Conditional Covenant for Temporalls, (*viz.*) for outward Proſperity, and long Life, and temporal Happineſs in the Land of *Canaan*. VVe find the *Old-Teſtament*, runneth moſt upon temporal promiſes. As we may read, *Deut.* 28. *Lev.* 27. And hence it was, the people of God in thoſe times, did ſo much ſtumble at the Proſperity of wicked men, and the Afflictions of Godly men; As *David*, *Jeremiah*, *Habakkuk*, and others did. But now under

under the Goſpel it is otherwayes. Since the coming of Chriſt in the Fleſh, and his pouring forth of Spiritual Bleſſings upon His Church, by the Holy-Ghoſt; He doth not feed his People, with the hopes of thoſe things that are temporal. The *New-Teſtament* runs moſt upon Spiritual promiſes: Only here and there, ſome Temporal ones are inſerted, and intermixed; which (we muſt know) are to be underſtood with an exception; and that they ſhall be performed, both when, and as, God ſeeth good. They do not alwayes intimate what ſhall be, But onely this, That, what ever be, it ſhall be for good. So then, having a Covenant made up of better promiſes, then thoſe that are temporal, it ſhould make us willing to be at God's diſpoſing concerning temporalls. It ſhould make us ſay, Lord, ſeeing thou haſt by Covenant, ſettled the higheſt things upon me; Deal with me for outwards as thou wilt.

2. A ſecond moving Conſideration is this, Our unfitneſs to be the chooſers of our own Conditions. Such is our folly and ignorance, that, if God ſhould leave us to our own choice, we ſhould make a very fooliſh choice. We ſhould chooſe conditions, as little children do Books, when they come into their Fathers ſtudies, (*viz.*) by their gilt Covers, and the gay Pictures that are in them. So would many chooſe conditions, rather by what they ſeem, then by what they are: rather by the fineneſs, then by the fitneſs of a condition. As a child chooſeth a Coat, he looks not ſo much at this, Whether it be fit, as whether it be fine and trimm. If God ſhould leave us, to chooſe our

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own conditions, we ſhould be apt to chooſe unfit conditions for our ſelves. Our chooſing, would be like a child's in an Apothecaries ſhop, who chooſeth the moſt painted box, when it may be, there is nothing but Rats-bane and Poyſon in it. We are apt to judg of Conditions, by their outſide, and never look what is within the condition. That man that looks no further then upon the outſide of a condition, will never make a right choice. He will be of the number of thoſe, of whom the Lord ſpeaketh, *Iſa.* 7. 15, 16. Who were apt *to chooſe the evil, and refuſe the good.* We are indeed children in making a choice of conditions: Ready to take Rats-bane for Sugar, Hemlock for Parſly, and the Berries of deadly Night-ſhade for Cherries. As there is need for a great deal of Spiritual Wiſdom, to judg of conditions; ſo alſo to chooſe conditions. The conſideration of our weakneſſe and folly, ſhould move us, to make the Lord our chooſer for us. How quickly ſhould we undo our ſelves, if the Lord left us but to our own choice. We ſhould inſtead of Bread, chooſe Stones; inſtead of Fiſhes, chooſe Serpents; inſtead of Food, chooſe Poyſon; and inſtead of Bleſſings, chooſe things Burthenſome; and inſtead of what is Really Good, we ſhould chooſe only what is good in Appearance. Men would chooſe Conditions, as many do Wives, (*viz.*) by their outwards, not their inwards. They chooſe Rich and Fine, rather then fit Wives; Whereas the comfort of Marriage, lieth in fitneſs and ſuitableneſs of Spirit. The fineneſs of a Shoo, is not that that makes it eaſie, but the fitneſs; ſo it is not the fine-

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neſs of a condition, but the fitneſs that makes it good. *Plutarch*, telleth us this Story of a Roman, He put away his Wife; his Friends thereupon asked him, What fault he found with her? Is ſhe not Honeſt? Is ſhe not Beautiful? He putting out his Foot, ſhewed them his ſhoo, and ſaid, Is not this ſhoo new? Is it not finely made? And yet none of you know where this ſhoo pincheth me. So, if we ſhould be left to chooſe conditions by their outſide, we ſhould chooſe that condition that doth look fine, but yet may prove evil and uneaſie to us.

3. A third moving conſideration, is this, We have a God that is Infinitely Wiſe, and therefore there is great reaſon, we ſhould leave the choice of our condition to Him. He made man, and therefore knowes what is beſt for man: He formed man, and therefore knowes how to frame his condition. *Pſal.* 103. 14. *He knoweth our frame.* It is there meant, of our outward frame, (*viz.*) The frame of our bodies: But it is true of our inward frame, (*viz.*) the frame of our Spirits. So, He muſt needs know beſt, what condition is beſt for us.

1. He knows what is in man. It is ſaid of Chriſt, (which ſpeaks his Divinity) *Joh.* 2. 25. *He knew what was in man.* God knowes man's inwards, and knowes what outwards will beſt ſuit with him. He that made us, knows what condition is beſt for us. He that hath taken meaſure of our Bodies, beſt knowes how to fit us with a Garment: And he that hath meaſured our Foot, beſt knows how to fit us with

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a Shoo. And God that knowes our Spirits, knowes beſt what condition will ſit them. *Heb.* 12. 9. He is called, *The Father of Spirits.* They come from Him who is the higheſt SPIRIT, as from the Fountain. And he is called, *Num.* 16.12. *The God of the Spirits of all fleſh.* He is the God of Spirits, and therefore muſt know the temper of Spirits, and what condition will beſt ſuite with them. As He that hath the Meaſure of our Bodies, is the fitteſt to make a Garment for us; and he that hath the Meaſure of our Foot, is fitteſt to make a Shoo for us: So he that hath the meaſure of our Spirits, is moſt fit to chooſe our conditions for us.

2. As He knoweth what is in man, ſo He knoweth what is in conditions; He knoweth what Effects they will have upon men. As he knoweth our Spirits, ſo he knoweth what conditions will agree with them. We are ſo ignorant, that if we were left to chooſe a condition, we ſhould chooſe that, that may be unſuitable. It is with many in chooſing conditions, as it is with ſome in drinking Wine, who (as I have told you before) ſwallow it greedily becauſe it is pleaſant, but conſider not it's Strength and Operation, and ſo become Intoxicated and Drunken by it. This ſheweth, He is fitteſt to chooſe our condition for us, that knoweth, both what is in us, and what is in conditions; and knoweth how our hearts and conditions will ſuit when they meet. We read of *Hazael*, That he knew not the Operation, that Honour and Promotion, would have upon his Spirit: When he returned this Anſwer to the Prophet, *Am I a dog, that*

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I ſhould do this? How many have deſtroyed themſelves, by chooſing thoſe things, whoſe Operations they knew not. We many times know the Names, when we know not the Natures, and Properties, of things. VVe know Proſperity by Name, when yet we know not it's Operations. VVe know Conditions as ſome know Hearbs, (*viz.*) their Names, but not their Vertues; but the Skilful Phyſitian knoweth them. God knowes what is in Conditions, and what Operation and Work, they will have upon our Spirits; And therefore is fitteſt to chooſe our condition for us.

4. A fourth moving conſideration is this, God's Soveraignty and Lord-ſhip over us. He is an Independent Majeſty, and we are dependent Creatures. We have a common ſaying, That beggars muſt not be chooſers. VVe are all beggarly creatures, that have nothing but what we receive from God. VVe live on Him, and depend on Him every day, for our daily bread. Now, to be our own chooſers of conditions, ſuits not with this. He is a proud and ſawcy beggar, that will be the chooſer of his own almes. VVe muſt know, God hath put us all into a ſtate of dependency. This ſhould keep us humble, and work us to a ſubmiſſion unto the will of God, and to be diſpoſed of by Him. VVe read of *Pharoah*, how he forgot himſelf in this particular, *Ezek.* 29. 3. He waxed proud, becauſe his Land was watered by the River *Nilus*. Thus it was in that Country, They had not ſhowres from Heaven, as other Countries had: For, *Nilus* at a certain time did overflow, and ſo did enrich the Land.

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Upon this, *Pharoah* thought, that he depended not upon God, for the fruitfulneſs of his Country; and preſumes to ſay, *Is not the River mine?* VVe muſt know, we are all dependent creatures: VVhat we have, was firſt in God's Hand, before it was in ours: As what we give to a beggar, was firſt in our hands, before it was in his.

5. A fifth moving conſideration, is, Our own unworthineſs. VVhat do we deſerve? VVe forget this, when we would have our own wills. VVhen we would chooſe our Conditions, may not the Lord Anſwer us, as we do a proud beggar, that is not contented with his almes, VVhy, what do you deſerve? Let God put us into what condition he will, we ſhould conſider, It is better then we do deſerve. It is the confeſſion of *Jacob*, *Gen.* 32. 10. *I am leſs then the leaſt of all thy mercies.* VVho is it, that can look upon himſelf as ſuch, and yet ſtand upon it, to have what he will?

6. A ſixth moving conſideration, is, To let the Lord chooſe our condition for us, is the way to have comfort in our condition. There is no loſs in it: VVhereas we ſhall be loſers, in being our own chooſers. There is comfort in leaving our ſelves to God, to chooſe our condition for us. Let the condition be never ſo uncomfortable, yet this puts comfort into it; That it is the condition, that God hath cho en for me, and ſo muſt needs be beſt for me. A mans condition may be ſuch, as may not ſuit with his own Carnal will and deſires; yet, this is that, that gives comfort to a Chriſtian, VVhen he can ſay, This is not a condition that is of my own chooſing, but the

the Lord hath choſen it for me. VVe read of *Abraham*, when the Lord called him out of his own Country, he went forth, not knowing whither he went, *Heb.* 11. *Abraham* did not loſe by doing this, and by making God his chooſer of a place for him. To cloſe this; Know, you will be no loſers in the end, in letting the Lord chooſe your condition for you. Remember what *Moſes* told *Iſrael*, *Deut.* 8. 16. That God did all that he had done to them, *to do them good at their latter end.* VVe may be aſſured, when we leave it to God to chooſe our condition for us, it ſhall be, firſt or laſt, good for us.

7. A ſeventh moving conſideration, is this, They have always been loſers, that have been their own chooſers of conditions. Look through the Scripture, you will find that they were, at firſt or laſt, unhappy in their choice: And that thoſe, who would have their own wills, had, in the end, no cauſe to rejoyce. VVe read of *Rachels* paſſionate wiſh, *Give me children, or elſe I dye.* And what got ſhe by it? *She died in Child-bearing.* VVe read, *Pſal.* 78. 18. of thoſe, that required *meat for their luſts.* God gave them meat for their hunger, but they muſt have meat for their luſts. And ſee what came of it, *Verſ.* 30. *While the meat was yet in their mouths, the Wrath of God came upon them*, &c. I ſhall refer you, to *Jer.* 42. 10. *Jer.* 43. 9, 10. *Jer.* 44. 26, 28. VVhere you may ſee, What thoſe got, that would be their own chooſers. Remember, this makes a condition a ſnare to us, When it is a condition of our own chooſing. 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. οἱ βουλόμενοι πλουτεῖν; They that will be Rich, (*i. e.*) Rich whether God will or

no:

ho: Who make it their aim, and design, and full purpose to be Rich, come of it what will, we may see, what comes of it, (*viz.*) They *fall into temptations, and into snares.*

Quest. But how may a man know, that he is not the chooser of his own condition?

Answ. In General. Consider this, Conditions are the higher and lower Rooms and Seats, in this great House of the World. As you know at a Table, there are the higher and lower Seats. As we read, *Math.* 23.6. *That the Pharisees did love the uppermost Seats at Tables.* VVe are apt to affect the higher conditions, but we should look to this, Whether the place we sit in, be the place of God's choosing? VVhether we did not place our selves? But, whether it be the place the great Master of the Family placed us in? According to the Counsel of our Saviour, *Luk.* 14. 8, 10. It is said of Jesus Christ, in respect of his Priestly Office, *Heb.* 5. 5. *He glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest.* (i. e.) He did not place himself in that Office. It was not an Office of his own choosing, but he was called to it by the Father. VVe should consider, VVhether we do not take the Honour to our selves, of placing our selves in conditions? VVe read, when *Elijah* was threatned by *Jezabel*, 1 King. 19. 3. *He fled for his life to Beersheba which belonged to Judah; he fled out of Israel, and thence he went to Horeb, and came into a Cave.* See *Vers.* 9. *Behold the word of the Lord came to him, And he said to him, What doest thou here, Elijah?* And so he asked him again, *Vers.*13. *What doest thou here, Elijah?* And we find he could give no good account of his being

ing there. We ſhould conſider when we are in a condition, What account, we can give to God of it. What anſwer we can make, when we are asked, How came you there? When we are either in a Proſperous or an Adverſe condition, and are asked, How we came there? what anſwer can you give? Can you ſay, Lord, It is the Condition that thou haſt choſen for me; and I am here by thy Diſpoſal and Appointment?

Now, this having been ſpoken in General; I ſhall come to ſhew you in ſome particulars, How a man may know, that he is not the chooſer of his own condition.

1. He that is not his own chooſer, is not guided by his own Counſel, but by God's Counſel. He conſulteth more with God, concerning a condition, then with his own Heart and Spirit. It is thus with many; when they look upon conditions, they fall to Conſulting with their own Carnal Hearts, and Carnal Friends, and to conſider, What is for their outward Eaſe, and Pleaſure, and Profit: But ſay not, as *David* did, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* They ask not Counſel of God, concerning their Condition. *Ezr.* 8. 21, 22. when *Ezra* was to go from *Babylon* to *Jeruſalem*, *he asked Counſel of God.* It is ſaid, *He proclaimed a Faſt at the River of Ahava, to ſeek of God a right way for them, and their little ones, and for all their ſubſtance.* Where you may ſee, They would have God chooſe their way for them. We read, 1 *Sam.* 14. 36. When *Saul* made the Motion of going after the *Philiſtines*, and to fall upon them by night, The people anſwered, *Do whatſoever ſeemeth good to thee*: But the Prieſt ſaid,

Let us draw near hither unto God. (q. d.) Let us not be our own Counſellors, but let us ask Counſel of God. Now in asking Counſel of God concerning a condition, we are to look to this, That it be,

1. Without Diſſimulation.
2. Without Self-Reſervation.

1. Without Diſſimulation. We read of thoſe, *Jer.* 42. that would have the Prophet inquire of God for them: They made as though they would Steer their Courſe, by his Counſel. But yet we find, they would be their own chooſers. For the Prophet telleth them, *Verſ.* 20. *You diſſembled in your hearts, when you ſent me to enquire of the Lord.* They ſent to enquire of God, when they were reſolved before what to do.

2. Without Self-Reſervation. Of this were thoſe guilty, *Jer.* 42. 6. Though they ſaid, *Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the Voice of the Lord.* (i. e.) Let God's anſwer be what it will, we will hearken to it. And yet we do find, That, becauſe the Lord's Anſwer did not agree with their wills, They would not hearken to it. So that we ſee, When they made that promiſe to the Prophet, it was with this Reſervation, Provided, that the Anſwer that comes from God, be anſwerable to our deſires. Thus they became their own chooſers, and rejected the Counſel of God, to their own deſtruction.

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2. This ſpeaks, we are not our own chooſers of Conditions, (*viz.*) When Lawful means are not neglected; nor Unlawful means uſed.

1. When Lawful means are not neglected, for the avoiding of the Evils of Affliction. There are many that do create croſſes to themſelves. We are to bear thoſe Croſſes that God layeth upon us; but we are not to make our own croſſes. There is little comfort, in bearing a croſs that is of our own making. It is one thing, when God makes us ſick, or poor, &c. And another thing when we make our ſelves ſo, by the neglect of means.

2. When Unlawful means, are not uſed to mend and better our outward condition. Some there are that God hath placed low: And, not being contented, they fall upon the uſe of unlawful means, to raiſe themſelves: And will not waite for the Invitations of Providence till God bid them ſit up higher. There is an expreſſion, *Prov.* 28. 30. *He that maketh haſte to be Rich, ſhall not be Innocent.* There is a making haſte to be Rich. Some will not keep the Road, but will break Hedges, and think to find a nearer way to be Rich, by the uſe of unlawful means.

3. This ſpeaks, we are not our own chooſers of Conditions, (*viz.*) When croſs-Providences do not diſcontent us. When what pleaſeth God, pleaſeth us. When we can ſay, as *Job* did, *Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and ſhall we*

not receive evil? It is then right, When what pleaſeth God, pleaſeth us. There is a known Story, of the anſwer that a Shepheard returned to ſome Travailers, who asked him, *What weather they ſhould have? Such weather as I pleaſe*, ſaith he; and told them, *The weather would be ſuch as God pleaſed, but what pleaſed God, pleaſed him.* It is then right; When what pleaſeth God, pleaſeth us.

4. This ſpeaks, that we are not our own chooſers of conditions, (*viz.*) When outward good things are prayed for, and outward evills are prayed againſt, With ſubmiſſion to the Will of God. Our Saviour telleth us, *John* 5. 30. *He came not to ſeek his own will, but the Will of Him that ſent him.* And when he was to drink of that bitter Cup, though he had prayed, it might paſs from him; yet he addeth, *Mat.* 26. 39. *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* So *John* 12. 27. *Father* (ſaith he) *Glorify thy ſelf.* When he had prayed before, to be kept from that hour, yet he cometh in with this, *Father, Glorify thy ſelf.* (q. d.) What ever becometh of me, Yet *Father, Glorify thy ſelf.* We ſhould Imitate Jeſus Chriſt in this, and ſay, *Lord, Let not my will, but thy Will be done.* VVe ſhould in praying, either for outward good things, or againſt outward evills, ſay, as thoſe did, *Acts* 21. 14. *The will of the Lord be done.* VVe have an expreſſion, 1 *Joh.* 5. 14. *This confidence we have, that if we ask any thing according to his Will, he heareth us.* This is the way to be heard, when we ask not only according to his Revealed Will, but with Submiſſion to his Secret Will. The Rule for the right uſing of the great Ordinance of Prayer, is, Asking according to the VVill of God.

God. It is not asking according to our own wills. It is not to ask what we will, for that is to be our own chooſers. In prayer, there is a making known of our deſires to God, both for the beſtowing the good things that we need, and averting the evils that we fear; and, in all this, there muſt be a ſubmiſſion to the will of God. In the beſt of Saints, there is Grace and Nature. Nature would have it's will, but then Grace cometh, and cauſeth a ſubmiſſion to God's will; And ſaith, as our Saviour did, *Let not my will, but thine be done.*

5. You may know, you are not your own chooſers of Conditions, by this, (*viz.*) When you are not too careful about the Iſſues, and Events of things. It is thus with ſome, They can be content to uſe the Means; but trouble themſelves, about the Iſſue, and Event. Some are content, that God ſhould preſcribe them the Means, but they would appoint the Succeſs. When we can uſe Means, and leave the Iſſue to God, without a diſtruſtful thought, then it is right. We have an expreſſion of *Joab's*, 1 *Chron.* 19. 13. When the children of *Ammon* came againſt *David*, he ſent *Joab* forth with his Army to give them Battle; and the Counſel that *Joab* gave to his brother *Abiſhai*, was this; *Be of good Courage, and let us behave our ſelves Valiantly for our People, and for the Cities of our God; and, let the Lord do that which is good in his ſight.* q. d. Let us uſe the Means, and leave the Iſſue, and Succeſs, to God. *Joab* knew, that the iſſues of Warr, were in the hands of God, and therefore left them to Him. Our thought-

fulneſs about the Iſſues of things, proceedeth from a deſire that is in us, to be our own chooſers. This is forbidden, *Phil.* 4. 6. *In nothing be careful.* The care forbidden, is about the Iſſues and Events of things: And ſuch a Care beſpeaks a fear, that things will not fall out according to our Deſires, and Expectations; and ſpeaks our deſire of being our own Chooſers.

6. This ſpeaks our not being our own Chooſers of a condition, (*viz.*) When we have a Promiſe, and can reſt upon Providence to bring it about, without ſhewing the way, how to do it. Remember, we are to ſerve Providence, but not to go before it. When we go about, to teach Providence its way, How to bring to paſs a Promiſe, this ſpeaks a deſire in us, of being our own chooſers. Thus it was with *Rebeccah*, when the promiſe was concerning her Sons, That *the elder ſhould ſerve the younger*: Yet ſhe could not be content with that, but muſt deviſe a way of her own, how to bring it to paſs. As if God needed her Sin, and her Shifting, to bring to paſs, what he had promiſed. Providence needeth not our Midwifery, to bring to paſs Gods Purpoſes. Concerning them, we may ſay, as the *Egyptian* Midwives did of the *Iſraelitiſh* women, That *they were lively, and were Delivered before the Midwives came to them.* So, let me ſay of Providences, and Promiſes, They need not our help, for their being Delivered. The truth is, we are too apt to mix our Wiſdom with God's, and to direct his Providence how to Work. *Job* 38. 2. *(Saith God) Who is this, that darkneth wiſdom, with words without knowledge?*

How

How many be there, that darken providence with their own ſinful Inventions? As though they would teach God, how to bring to paſs, and perform his own Promiſes. It is then right, When we can wait upon God, for the performance of his Promiſes in his own Way; And this ſpeaks, We are not our own chooſers.

7. This ſpeaks we are not our own chooſers of a condition, (*viz.*) When we can wait God's time (if it be ſad), for the change of it. There is an Expreſſion of the Lord's, *Jer.* 49. 19. *Who will appoint me the time?* Some there are, that will preſume to appoint God the time, when He ſhall alter things, and change their condition. We read, *John* 2. *At the Marriage of Cana when they wanted wine; Chriſts Mother ſaid to him, They have no wine*, Verſ. 3. But he anſwereth her, *Verſ.* 4. *Mine hour is not yet come.* Thus we would ſet God the time, of changing our Water into Wine. When we need a Mercy, then is our time to ſeek it; but we are to wait God's time for the beſtowing of it. We are not to ſet God a day, but wait. As *Habukkuk* ſaid he would do, *Hab.* 2. 1, 2, 3. *He would get him into his Watch-Tower.* He knew the Viſion was for an appointed time, and ſo would wait God's time, for the deliverance of his people.

8. This ſpeaks, we are not our own chooſers of conditions, (*viz.*) When the Iſſue and Succeſs, and Event of things, doth not diſcontent us. Of this I have ſpoken before, and therefore do but touch it. *Bernard* hath a paſſage, *Quadr. Serm.* 6. *Enitendum ut ſit nobis cum Deo una voluntas; & quæcunque ei placent, placeant & nobis*, We

ought to endeavour, that our wills may be one with God's; and that whatſoever pleaſeth Him, may pleaſe us. But of this I have ſpoken before.

Queſt. But ſome may ask, Whether it be lawful for a man to wiſh, that a thing had fallen out otherwiſe then it did? As when a loſs or croſs befalleth us, Whether we may lawfully wiſh, it had not been ſo?

Anſw. I ſhall ſpeak ſomewhat to the Anſwer of this Queſtion. So, we muſt diſtinguiſh between things that are

1. Offenſive to God.
2. Troubleſome to us.

1. For things that are Offenſive to God, VVe may lawfully wiſh they had not been. VVe find the Lord himſelf wiſhing that, *Pſal.* 81. 13. *O that my people had hearkened to me, and that Iſrael had walked in my way.* So that, To wiſh, that thoſe evills that offend God, had not been, is lawful.

2. There are Evils Troubleſome to us. And about them lieth the Queſtion, VVhether it be lawful for us to wiſh, whether ſuch evils had not befallen us.

For anſwer to that: Though in ſome caſes it may be lawful, yet I ſhall ſhew you in ſome caſes it is unlawful.

1. When the wiſh proceedeth from an unwillingneſs to be under the Croſs. We may ſit down and bewail the ſtate of things, and ſo may wiſh things were otherwiſe then they are; but then we muſt ſee, that

that this proceeds not from delicacy of ſpirit, and unwillingneſs to be under the Croſs. A Chriſtian ſhould love to ſuffer, though he loveth not that which he ſuffereth.

2. The wiſh is Evil, when it proceedeth from Murmuring and Diſcontentedneſs of ſpirit, with the Providences and Diſpenſations of God. Then to wiſh, ſuch and ſuch a thing had not been, is ſinful, and a kind of ſecret blaſphemy; When we fall upon cenſuring God's Adminiſtrations: This is to make our ſelves wiſer than God.

Now conſider in what caſes we may wiſh things had not fallen out, ſo as to make ſuch wiſhes lawful.

1. When they are not Abſolute, but Hypothetical. When the wiſh is only thus; If God had been ſo pleaſed; or, If the Lord had ſeen it good.

2. When it is only by way of bewailing the ſtate of things, but yet there is a willingneſs to ſubmit to God.

3. When in theſe our wiſhes, we mix Faith with our Tears; and, under black and ſad Diſpenſations, we believe that God is good, and good to us. As the Pſalmiſt ſaith, *Pſal.* 73. 1. *Yet God is good to Iſrael.* To cloſe this: We are to conſider two things,

1. We may wiſh that, that God wills not, and yet not ſin. As the deliverance of a people from Judgment, whom God intends to Deſtroy.

2. We may ſin in wiſhing, and deſiring what God willeth, (I mean in reſpect of His Secret Will) as the death of a Father,

a Child; and Husband, a Wife: For whoſe lives we may lawfully pray, when they are ſick, though it may be the will of God that they ſhall dye. This yet to be with a Submiſſion to His will, though not yet Revealed.

Thus I have given you Directions in General, concerning your chooſing of conditions.

I now come to give you in ſome particular ones.

1. Seek not great things for your ſelves, but deſire only things that are convenient. We are apt to have our longings after things that are unfit for us. We read of thoſe, *Rom.* 1. 28. *Who did things that were not convenient.* So there are many, who deſire things that are not convenient, *Jer.* 45. *Verſ.* the laſt, The Lord giveth *Baruch* a ſharp reproof for this, *And ſeekeſt thou great things for thy ſelf? Seek them not.* We ſhould ſtill remember *Agur* his wiſh, *Prov.* 30. 8. *Feed me with food convenient for me.* According to the Original, it is, *Feed me with the bread of my allowance.* (i. e.) that that is my proportion. *Tremelius* rendreth it, *Demenſum*, mine allowance. Some think, that *Demenſum* ſignifieth, a monthly proportion of food, deriving the word *a menſe*: Some think, it is *a metiendo*, from meaſuring. So *Agur* prayeth for his meaſured allowance, (*i. e.*) ſuch an allowance as did ſuit with the neceſſary occaſions of his life. We read of *Jacob*, when he was going to *Padan-Aram*, Gen. 28. 20. that *he vowed a vow*; And ſee what he deſireth of God? It is, *bread to eat, and rayment to put on.* He deſireth not Honour, and Riches, and great things, but things neceſſary and convenient. He deſireth not delicates, (as the children of *Iſrael* did) *to be meat for his luſt, but bread for*

for his hunger: If thou wilt give me (ſaith he) *bread to eat*. And then he deſired not cloaths for his pride, *but raiment to put on*, (viz.) cloaths to cover his nakedneſs. The Apoſtle, *Rom.* 12. 16. among thoſe Aphoriſms or Aphoriſtical precepts, he gives concerning practice, he gives ſome concerning conditions, *Minde not high things, but condeſcend to men of low eſtate*. Minde not high things, μὴ τα ὑψηλὰ φρονῦντες. And whereas our Tranſlation reads it, *condeſcend to men of low eſtate*, in the Greek, it is only, τοῖς ταπεινοῖς, and may be rendred, *low Things*. And ſo the *Antitheſis* requireth that it ſhould be the neuter gender, anſwering to τὰ ὑψηλὰ, *high things*. It is as if the Apoſtle had ſaid, *Minde not high things, but condeſcend to low things*. The ſame Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Tim.* 6. 8. *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*. Contentment is the reſt of the Deſire; having that that is neceſſary and convenient, we ſhould deſire no more. And the Apoſtle gives the reaſon, *Ver.* 7. *For we brought nothing into this world, neither may we carry any thing out*.

Here I ſhall do Two things:

1. Shew you the Good of deſiring only what is fit, and convenient.
2. How a man may judge of Conveniency, and how he may know what is convenient for him.

I. Conſider the Good of deſiring what is only convenient, and of that condition that is fit for us.

1. It is the condition that is freeſt from Temptations, and ſo the beſt condition. The tempta-

temptation commonly lyeth beyond the line of conveniency. The Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. *That they that will be rich, fall into many ſnares, &c.* When men are not content with neceſſary things, and convenient things; but they muſt have Great things, and an Abundance; they lay themſelves open to, and fall under, many temptations. This *Agur* doth acknowledg, *Prov.* 30. 8, 9. In a Storm, that Ship is in leaſt danger, that carrieth the loweſt Sayl. The things of this Life, are things we eaſily ſin in; Great things make us lyable to great Temptations. And this is one reaſon, why the apoſtle exhorteth, that Prayer ſhould be made for great Perſons, *viz. For Kings, and ſuch as are in Authority,* 1 *Tim.* 2. 2.

Chriſtians, you are to obſerve, there are two ſorts of perſons the Tempter is ready to work upon, and to get advantage of;

1. Of ſuch as are in a High condition.
2. Of ſuch as are in a Low condition.

1. Such as are in a high condition; who ſail with Top, and Top-gallant. Hence it is, that our Saviour ſaith, *It is hard for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* It is rare, to find Great men, and Rich men, Good men.

2. Such as are in a Low condition, and are Diſcontented with it; That would have higher, and fuller Sailes: *i.e.* Better, and greater things. Theſe through their diſcontedneſs, lay themſelves open to Temptations. It is obſerved of Witches, who have given themſelves up to the Devil; that they are (for the moſt part) ſuch as are Old, and Melancholy Women eſpecially, & ſuch as are of the poorer, and

meaner

meaner Sort: And one reaſon of it, is, Their being diſcontented with the means of their condition. Remember this, Our being contented with things convenient, without ſeeking great things for our ſelves, will free us from many temptations. There is a Story of a Roman, that had great Bribes ſent him, and other great Rewards promiſed him: The meſſenger that brought them, found him at Dinner with a diſh of Turnips. He gave this Anſwer to the meſſenger, *Carry back your Preſents: he that can be content with ſuch Fare, needeth them not.*

2. A convenient eſtate is, the eſtate that is moſt eaſy. Thoſe are fit things that are moſt eaſy; that ſhoo is the eaſieſt, that fits our foot. It is ſaid of *Abraham*, *Gen.*13.2. that he *was very rich.* The Hebrew word rendred rich, ſignifieth Heavy, *viz. Abraham was very Heavy.* Great things are burthenſom, and heavy things; when things convenient are not ſo. They are attended with a double burthen.

1. A burthen of Duties
2. A burthen of Cares.

1. A burthen of Duties. Much will be required of thoſe, to whom God hath given much of the things of this Life. The more Honour and Riches any have, the more Duty is expected.

2. A burthen of Cares. Great things are attended with great Cares, and great Fears. *Eccleſ.*5.12. *The ſleep of a Labouring man is ſweet, but the abundance of the Rich will not ſuffer him to ſleep.* The Rich mans care of getting, and his fear of loſing, depriveth him of his reſt. It is with ſuch, as it is with thoſe troubled with that diſeaſe called *Ephialtes*, or *Night-mare*; they feel a burthen in their ſleep, and think they have a Mountain lying upon their breſts.

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Know this, A Convenient eſtate is the moſt eaſie, and is not attended with thoſe troubles and burthens, as Great things are. We know, Garments that ſit cloſe to us, are eaſieſt for us. A looſe garment, as a Cloak, &c. in a windy day, becomes troubleſom. A ſtaff is a help to a man in his Journey, but a Bundle of ſtaves is a burthen. From all this, you may gather, That a convenient eſtate is the moſt eaſie.

3. A convenient eſtate is the ſafeſt, and moſt ſecure, in reſpect of outward dangers. It makes us leſs liable to Envy, and Hatred. The Hiſtorian ſaid of the Roman Emperours, That they got nothing by being Emperours, *niſi ut citius interficerentur*; but that they were killed the ſooner. Low Trees ſtand in thoſe Tempeſts that overturn the tall ones. Great things do but ſet us upon a Pinacle, from whence we are ready, every moment, to fall, and break our Necks.

4. Conſider this, Things convenient, are moſt commodious for us as Chriſtians. Do but conſider, what Chriſtianity is compared to, in Scripture; and you will find, That great, and ſuperfluous things, do not ſuit with it. It is compared to three things.

To a Race.
To a Warfar.
To a Pilgrimage.

1. To a Race. 1 *Cor.* 9. 24. *Know you not, that they that run in a race, run all,* &c. They knew it well, for the *Iſthmian*-Games were at *Corinth*, Verſ. 24. *So run that you may obtain.* This ſheweth that Chriſtianity is a Race: Now when a man is to run a Race, he chooſeth that habit that is moſt leight. Some have loſt the Race, by the over-burthening of

of themſelves. It is thus with ſome, They never know when they have enough: And never conſider, Can I run this Race with all theſe cumberſome things about me? They load themſelves with thick clay, which unfits them to run that Race. This made our Saviour ſay, *That it was hard for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* That man that defireth only convenient things, hath advantage of him that burtheneth himſelf with things unneceſſary and ſuperfluous. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Heb.* 12. 1. *That we ſhould caſt off what preſſeth us down, and run with patience, the race that is ſet before us.* The things of this life, are things that are burthenſome and heavy, and muſt needs make us run the Race with the more difficulty. I ſhall conclude this, with a Story I have heard of a Pluraliſt that had two Benefices: He being viſited by a Miniſter upon his Death-bed, and ſpeaking of his hope of going to Heaven: The Miniſter Replied, Our Saviour telleth us, *That narrow is the way, and ſtrait is the gate that leadeth to life.* And do you think to enter Heaven, with two Steeples on your back?

2. Chriſtianity is compared to a Warfar. As you may ſee, 1 *Tim.* 1. 18. 1 *Tim.* 6. 12. Now, how is it with ſuch men as goe to War? They entangle not themſelves with the Affairs of this life. 2 *Tim.* 24. *A loaded Souldier, full of ſpoil and plunder, is unfit to fight.* Convenient things are moſt fit for Chriſtian-Souldiers; and when we deſire things beyond the line of conveniency, we forget that by our profeſſion we are ſuch.

3. Chriſtianity is called a Pilgrimage. Chriſtians are ſaid to be Strangers and Pilgrims. Travellers

vellers desire not to burthen themselves with things unnecessary and cumbersome. I told you before, a staff in a Journy is helpful, but a bundle of staves is burthensome. It was the manner of the *Jews*, to wear long garments: But when they were to go a Journy, they did truss and tuck them up, that they might not hinder them in their Journy. A long garment is apt to make us fall. Convenient things are most suitable for us, as we are Pilgrims. Thus you see the good of things only-Convenient.

CHAP. XIV.

WE now come to answer another Question, that some may Ask, concerning, What is convenient? that so they may know that they desire not things unfit, and unproportionable.

Answ. There are many that hearken to the voice of Covetousness, but not of Conscience; and so are mistaken in their judging of what is competent, and convenient for them. We must know, Covetousness knoweth no competency, but is still crying, Give, Give. The Greek word for Covetousness, is, πλεονεξία *an having of more.* When it hath this, and that, and the other thing, yet it never hath enough. A covetous man never knoweth what is his *demensum*, and due proportion; and so, never content. I shall shew you in Four particulars, How you may judg, What is competent, and convenient for men in this Life.

1. That that Nature requireth, *viz.* Meat and Drink to nourish and feed the Body, and Clothing to keep it warm. Among the Rules that Wise men give

give for the regulating of our desires, This is one that we should desire naturally, according to Nature and indeed, they make it the Fundamental rule. Nature is content with little, when Covetousness is content with nothing, let a man have never so much. It was the saying of *Philip* of *Macedon*, when once he had had a fall upon the earth; being risen up, and having viewed the Impression his body had made upon the ground: *Oh* (saith he) *how little, by Nature, serveth us, and yet whole Kingdoms will not content us.* Nature is content with few things: This the Heathens knew. *Socrates* could say, when he saw great Treasures carried through a City: *O, how much can I be without!* It is the saying of *Seneca*, *Parabile est quod natura desiderat, et expositum ad manum est; admanum est quod sat est.* That is ready at hand, that nature desireth, and will suffice it. Remember, Nature is contented with a little, and Grace with less.

2. That that is fit for the Estate wherein God hath set us. This is another rule, given for the Regulating of our desires, (*viz.*) That we are to desire, by our Relation; (*i. e.*) in reference to the place wherein God hath set us. We must know, that competencies are not all of one size and measure: That that may be a competency for one, may not be so for another. We must know, there are distinctions of persons. God hath made some to be high, and some low. As in the world, he hath made Mountains and Vallies; so there are in the world, men of several Degrees, and Estates, and these have their several Competencies, Conveniencies, and Proportions. *Agur* (no doubt) was a man of quality, (some think he lived in the dayes of *Solomon*, others think in the dayes of *Hezekiah*). He prayeth for what was

convenient for him. Then a man exceedeth the line of conveniency, when he desireth things that are above the State, Calling, and Condition, wherein God hath set him.

3. Those are convenient things, that are necessary for us, in relation to the Charge we have, and for the maintaining of our Families. The Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 5.8. saith, *He is worse than an Infidel, that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house.* *Solomon* hath an observation, *Eccles.* 4. 8. *I have seen* (saith he) *a man that hath neither Child nor Brother, and yet there is no end of his labours.* (viz.) he never hath enough, although he hath none to provide for, but himself.

4. Those things are convenient, that are apparently needful, for the future, and the time to come. The Scripture condemneth not a care of providence but commends, and commands it, 2 *Cor.* 12. 14. *The Fathers ought to lay up for the children*, &c. As we read of *Joseph*, *Who fore-seeing the seaven years of famine, laid up Corn before hand.* To close this: only seek after things that are more for usefulness then delight; and things whereby you may be made more serviceable to your God, and things that suit with the present condition of times. This was *Baruch's* failing, of which the Lord telleth him, *That in sad, and evil times, he sought great things for himself.*

Thus for the first. That we should not seek great things for our selves, but things Convenient.

2. Seek after those things, that are, without doubt and dispute, and without controversy, good for a man in this life. When a man seeketh after Riches, and Honour, &c. There is some question to be made, Whether these things are good for him? But there

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are ſome things, that, without diſpute, are good for a man in this life. The Apoſtle hath an expreſſion, 1*Cor.* 9. 26. *I therefore ſo run, ὡς οὐκ ἀδήλως, as not for an uncertainty.* I have told you before, it alludes to the *Iſthmian*-Games, where Running, and Wreſtling, were the chiefeſt Excerciſes. And he telleth you, that thoſe that run thoſe Races, though they run for a Crown, yet it was but for a corruptible Crown: They did but run for that that was uncertain and corruptible; but he, for thoſe things that were certain and incorruptible.

Queſt. Some may ask, But what are thoſe things that are good without doubt, without controverſy, for a man in this life?

Anſw. Though we are not able to tell you concerning outward things, What are good for a man in this life? Yet we can tell you, of ſome things that are indeed good. Thoſe things are of two ſorts.

1. General.
2. Particular.

1. General. Godlineſs is good for a man in this life, and that without controverſy. We find, how much the Scripture doth Magnify and Extol it, as that that is abſolutely and really Good. It ſpeaks that of Godlineſs, that it never ſpeaks of Riches, or Honour, or any worldly thing, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. *Godlineſs is profitable to all things, having the promiſes of the life that now is, and of that that is to come.* This the Scripture never ſaid concerning any worldly things. Profit we know, is that that moſt men look after. And we ſay, Thoſe Arguments drawn *ab Utili*, from Profit, are the moſt moving. Now we ſee, Godlineſs is profitable for all things, not only for the life to come, but for this life too; It is profitable.

1. For all persons: the things of this world are not so. Godliness is profitable for High, and Low; for Old and Young; for all Sexes, Men, and Women; for all Relations, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants.

2. It is profitable for all things: For all the Actions and Businesses of your lives: For all Religious Actions: For all Civil Actions: You cannot Buy or Sell, nor converse with men as you should, without this: Yea, it is profitable in respect of natural Actions, you cannot Eat, nor Drink, nor do any other thing to the glory of God, without Godliness.

3. It is profitable at all times. It is profitable in Health, in Sickness, in the time of Youth, and of Old-age; in the time of Peace, and in the day of Trouble, when Riches will not profit. As *Solomon* telleth us, *Prov.* 10.

Lastly, (which is the chief) Godliness is profitable for both worlds. It is profitable in relation to this world. It hath the promises of this life. And it is profitable, in relation to the world to come. It hath (as the Apostle telleth us) the promises of that life that is to come. In Scripture, there are no such promises made to any man, as he is Great, and Rich, and Honourable, but as he is Godly. To close this, The Scripture speaketh this of Godliness, That *it is gain with contentment*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 6. Which sheweth, how it differeth from all worldly gain. *Godliness is great gain with contentment*. Covetousness may be gain, but it is without contentment: But Godliness is gain, with contentment: It is gain in the mid'st of losses: It makes a man contented, whether he hath little or much.

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To Covetousness, there is nothing that is enough: But Godliness, sheweth a man enough in God; which makes him say, not only with *Esau*, I have enough; but to say with *Jacob*, I have all. Now for Particulars.

1. It is good for a man in this life, to eye more the enjoyment *of* God, then enjoyments *from* God. This is good without controversy, and without dispute. Some there are that possess much in this life, but never put this question, Do I enjoy God, with the things that I receive from him?

2. It is good for a man in this life, To rejoyce more in the God of his Mercies, then in the Mercies of his God: Some rejoyce in this, That their Corn, and their Wine, is increased, and that they have goods laid up for many years: This speaks worldliness, not Godliness. Godliness teacheth a man to rejoyce more in the Creator, then in the Creature: More in the Fountain, then in the Stream: More in the Sun, then in the Stars. *Psal.* 4. *Thou hast* (saith *David*) *put more joy into my heart, than they had, when their Corn and their Wine increased.*

3. This is, without dispute, good for a man in this life, (*viz.*) To serve God chearfully, however He serve us, and deal with us. Selfishness will teach us to serve God, while he serves us. He shall have Duty, while we have Mercies: He shall have Work, only while we have Wages; according to the Antient Proverb, *No penny, no Pater-noster.* Godliness will destroy this mercinariness. Satnan would perswade the Lord, that *Job* did serve him only upon that accompt; but he found it otherwise.

4. This, without dispute, is good for a man in this

life, (*viz.*) To keep God, whatſoever we loſe for keeping Him: And to pleaſe Him, whomſoever we diſpleaſe. Wordlineſs will teach us, to keep Him, while we can keep our worldly preferments: But Godlineſs will teach us, to keep Him, though we loſe all for keeping Him.

5. This, without diſpute, is good for a man in this life (*viz.*) To remember God in all our wayes, and to eye his Glory in all the Actions and buſineſs of this life. 1 *Cor.*10.31. *Whether you eat or drink, or whatſoever elſe you do, do all to the Glory of God.*

6. This, without diſpute, is good for a man in this life, (*viz.*) To Conſecrate all his outward things, and enjoyments, to the Service of God. We read, 1 *King.* 20. 3. When *Benhadab* ſent this meſſage to *Ahab*, *Thy Silver and thy Gold is mine: Thy Wives and thy Children (even the Goodlieſt) are mine. Ahab* returned this Anſwer, *I am thine, and all that I have is thine.* So it is good for a man to ſerve the Lord, with the things that he enjoyes, as thoſe things that are His. We read, How *thoſe* in the primitive times, *Acts* 4. 35. *that had poſſeſſions, ſold them, and laid them down at the Apoſtles feet.* So it is good for a man, To lay down all (as I may ſay) at the Feet of God.

7. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) To give the things of another life the preheminence. This our Saviour ſheweth us, in *Mat.* 6. 33. *Seek firſt the Kingdom of God, and it's Righteouſneſs*, &c. We are to ſet Heaven, above Earth, and Heavenly things, above all worldly things. It is not good for a man, to give the things of this life, the upper hand of the things of Eternity. We find, how Jeſus Chriſt hath placed things,

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Prov. 3. 16. (viz.) *Length of dayes on the right hand, and Riches and Honour on the left.* The right hand is given to Eternity, and the things of Eternity; when Riches and Honour, &c. are ſet at the left hand. We read of *Joſeph*, Gen. 48. 14. When he heard his Father *Jacob* was ſick, he came with his two Sons, to viſit his Father, and preſented them to him, to receive a bleſſing from him: But that Son that he brought to his Fathers right hand, he put his left hand on. Thus it is with many, They ſet thoſe things at the right hand, that Jeſus Chriſt ſetteth at the left. It is good, when we ſee the things of this life, ſtriving to get the uppermoſt place, To bid them come down, and ſit lower.

Some may ask, What is it that ſpeaks our giving the things of another life, the Preheminence?

Anſwer,

1. When we give them the preheminence, in reſpect of Eſteem. When they are the things moſt prized and eſteemed by us: As *David* ſaid, *Pſal.* 84. 10. *That one day in God's Court, is better than a thouſand.* It is good for a man in this life, to think meanly of the things of this life, in compariſon of the things of another life. In *Iſa.* 40. 17. When God's infinite perfections are looked on, all the things of this world are as nothing: All Nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs then nothing. So ſhould we make account of the things of this life, as nothing, in compariſon of that life that is to come.

2. Giving them the preheminence, in reſpect of Affection, *Colloſ.* 3. 2. *Set your Affections on things Above, and not on the things of the Earth.* It is good for a man in this life, to have his Af-

ſections weaned from the things of this life, and wedded to the things of another life. Though we have the things of this life in our hands, yet thoſe things ſhould not have our hearts. Remember, our Affections were made for better things, than things below.

3. Giving them the preheminence, appears in reſpect of purſuit, (*viz.*) When the things of another life are chiefly ſought after: According to the command of our Saviour, *Mat.* 6. 33. *Seek firſt the Kingdom of God.* Joh. 6. 27. *Labour not for the meat that periſheth*, &c. The things of another life, are the things that are primarily, and principally to be ſought after.

4. Giving the things of another life the Preheminence, appears by this, (*viz.*) in making the things of this life ſerviceable, to thoſe of another life. The Lord ſaid concerning *Eſau*, and *Jacob*, *The elder ſhall ſerve the younger*. Thus many make the things of Heaven, to ſerve their inferiors; giving the better hand to the things of this life.

5. Giving the things of another life the Preheminence, will appear by this, (*viz.*) The Advantages, and diſadvantages that relate to another life. When an Heavenly advantage is more to us, than an Earthly one; And when an Heavenly diſadvantage, is more to us than a temporal one. It will appear thus, When we do that, that is to our diſadvantage, when the diſadvantage only concerns this life, and the thing done, concerns the life to come. This did *Moſes*, in forſaking *Egypt*, He did that that was ſeemingly diſadvantagious to him, in relation to this life. We read of thoſe, *Heb.* 11. 35. *They accepted not deliverance.* The

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meaning is, They accepted it not, upon the tearms upon which it was offered. To have had deliverance was a temporal advantage: But to have accepted it upon thoſe tearms, (they found) would have been an Eternal diſadvantage to them. Upon this accompt, did the Martyrs of Old, refuſe life when it was offered them: They ſaw a temporal advantage cloy'd with an Eternal diſadvantage.

Thus for the Seventh thing, that is good for a man in this life.

8. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) So to live, and ſo to walk, (what ever his condition be) as that he may fetch comfort from the conſideration, of what his condition in another life ſhall be. Some there are, that being in a proſperous condition, draw all their comfort from it. Of ſuch *David* ſpeaketh, They have their Portion only in this life: They comfort themſelves only with what is their Portion here, without conſidering what their condition will be hereafter. It is thus with gracious ones, (what ever their condition be) They can ſay, My refreſhment and comfort, floweth not from the things of my condition, and the Springs below: But from the conſideration of this, (*viz.*) What my condition ſhall be in Heaven, and ſo from the Springs Above. Thus in the ſaddeſt condition, we find the Saints of God, have comforted themſelves with that. As you may ſee, 2 *Cor.* 5. 1. *Heb.* 11. 10. *Rom.* 8. 18. *Heb.* 10. 34. *Heb.* 13. 14. *Heb.* 4. 9. To cloſe this, It is good, when our preſent condition in this life, is ſweetned with the conſideration, of what it ſhall be in another life. It may be, our houſe doth not pleaſe

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us, but it is comfortable to think, we *ſhall* have a Pallace. It is the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion, *Pſal.* 66. 12. *Thou broughteſt us through Fire and Water*, yet *thou broughteſt us forth into a Wealthy place.* Remember, that the Wealthy place, that is beyond our condition, gives a gracious Heart comfort, in the worſt of temporal conditions.

9. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) What ever his portion in this life be, To make God his Portion. Let his Portion be a Portion of Comforts, or a Portion of Croſſes: It is good to have a Portion above all this, (*viz.*) The God of all comfort. As *Jacob* ſaid to his Son *Joſeph*, when he was a dying, *Gen.* 48. 22. *I have given to thee, one Portion above thy Brethren.* It is good in the beſt outward condition, when we can ſay, I have a Portion above all this. We find in Scripture, the Saints of God, comforting themſelves, with this and that.

1. When they had ſomewhat elſe to glory in.
2. VVhen they had nothing elſe to glory in, or fetch comfort from.

1. VVhen they had ſomething elſe to glory in, and fetch comfort from: VVhen they have had a large portion of outwards; yet they have rejoyced in this, That the Lord was their Portion. Thus *David*, *Pſal.* 16. 5, 6. *Pſal.* 119. 57.

2. The Saints have Gloried in the Lords being their Portion, when they have had nothing elſe to boaſt of. Thus did the Church, when in a ſad condition, *Lam.* 3.24. *The Lord is my Portion, ſaith my Soul.* This the Church ſpake, in the day of her Captivity. You muſt know, God is the beſt

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Portion. VVere a mans portion in this life, as larg as from Sea, to Sea; were it as Glorious a Portion as *Solomons* was, yet it is nothing, except we have the Lord for our Portion. God is a Soul-Portion, and muſt needs be the beſt Portion; VVhich will appear, if we conſider theſe things.

1. *Excellency.* The Soul is an Excellent thing; and baſe things, (ſuch as the things of the world are) can never be a fit portion for the Soul. God is Supereminently, and Unconceaveably Excellent; and therefore, in Scripture, Great and Excellent things (according to the Original) are called the things *of God.*

2. *Spirituality.* The Soul is a Spirit. God is a Spirit: And nothing but a Spirit, can be a portion for a Spirit. The Soul is the ſpirit created, and God is the Spirit Creating: And nothing can be the portion of Spirits, but he that is the God and Father of Spirits.

3. *Infiniteneſs.* Nothing but what hath Infinite Fulneſs in it, can be the Soul's Portion. There is an Image of God's Infiniteneſs upon the Soul: It's deſires are Infinite, and ſo needs an Infinite Portion.

4. *Everlaſtingneſs.* The Soul liveth for ever, and ſeeketh an everlaſting Portion. VVhen *Baſil* was tempted by the Emperour's Lievtenant, with offers of Mony, and Preferment: He returned this Anſwer, *Give me Riches that will laſt for ever, and Preferment that will indure to Eternity. God*

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is a Portion for ever. Pſal. 73. 26. *He is my Portion for ever.* He is the Soul's Portion in this life. As *David* ſpeaketh, *Pſal.* 142. 5. *Thou art my Portion in the Land of the living.* And he is the Soul's Portion in the world to come: As the Apoſtle telleth us, 1 *Cor.* 15. *God will be all in all.* There he will be ſuch a Portion as is above Expreſſion, above Compariſon, above preſent Senſe and Feeling, above Deſire, above Hope and Expectation, above Imagination.

10. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) To have Sin pardoned. *Pſal.* 32. 1. *Bleſſed is the man, whoſe iniquity is forgiven, and whoſe ſin is covered.* He ſets not the Crown of Bleſſedneſs, upon the head of the Rich man, or the Great man; but on the head of that man, whoſe iniquity is forgiven. Pardon of ſin, is radically every good thing. When *Iſrael* had committed that great Sin, the firſt thing *Moſes* prayeth for, is pardon of their ſin, *Exod.* 30. 32. Pardon of ſin, is that, without which

1. The beſt worldly condition, cannot make a man happy. Let him be a Rich man, a Great man; yet he is not a happy man, except his iniquity be forgiven, and his ſin be pardoned. Worldly things, cannot mount a man above the evill that is in ſin, and ſo he muſt needs be unhappy. It is ſaid of *Naaman*, That he was a Great, and Honourable man, but he was a Leaper; that imbittered all. So, let a man be what he will for his outward condition, ſin unpardoned will ſpoil all. What comfort hath

a Great man, if he hath the Stone in the Bladder, or the Gout? So, when ſin is unpardoned, it imbitters the comforts of the beſt worldly condition. If we could extract the quinteſſence of all outward comforts, into one Catholick and Univerſal comfort, yet it would do nothing, to cure the evil of ſin.

2. The worſt worldly condition, cannot make a pardoned man Miſerable. The comfort of a pardoned condition, is ſuch, as is not to be over-topped by any diſcomfort in any worldly condition. Our Saviour ſpeaking to the man, ſick of the *Palſy*, ſaith, *Mat.* 9. 2. *Son, be of good comfort, thy ſins are forgiven thee.* Pardon of ſin, is the greateſt comfort. *Iſa.* 40. 1. *Comfort ye my people, (ſaith the Lord).* And one thing wherewith they were to be comforted, was this, *That their iniquity was pardoned.* Could we extract, out of all worldly Evills, the quinteſſence of them, into one Catholick and Univerſal Miſery (As it is reported of *Cæſar-Borgia*, That he was ſo skilled, in the Art of Poyſoning, that he could contract the Poyſon of a hundred *Toads*, into one drop): Yet all this would not amount to the Miſery that attendeth ſin.

11. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, To lay up Treaſure there, where things are Pureſt, and things are Sureſt, (*viz.*) To lay up Treaſure in Heaven: According to our Saviours Counſel, *Mat.* 6. 19, 20. *Lay not up for your ſelves, Treaſures on earth, where the ruſt, and*

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moath doth corrupt, &c. Some may ask, But is it not good for a man to lay up Treaſures on earth? Let me tell you, It is not good for you, to have thoſe for your only Treaſure. They are Treaſures that Ruſt may corrupt, or Theeves Steal. But would you know, what is good for a man indeed, in this life? It is, laying up Treaſure in Heaven. There things are Pure, *no Ruſt to Corrupt them*; and there things are Sure, *no Theeves to Steal them.* It is Wiſdom in treaſuring up of things, not to reflect upon the place from which we are going; but upon the place, to which we are going. Were a man only for this life, and were this world only, to be his continuing City; then it were ſomewhat, to lay up Treaſures here: But remember, this life is but a paſſage to another; and it is good to lay up our Treaſure there, whither we are going. It ſhould be with us, as with a man that is removing into another Country; He ſends his Treaſure before hand thither, and keeps no more about him, then what will ſerve him for his Removal. So, that without controverſy, this is good for a man in this life, To lay up Treaſure in Heaven.

12. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) To ſeek after diſtinguiſhing Favours. Conditions in themſelves, are un-diſtinguiſhing, *Eccleſ.* 9. 1. We ſhould, therefore, look after thoſe things that ſpeak diſtinguiſhing, and not common, Love, *Pſal.* 4. 6. *There be many that ſay,* (ſaith *David*) *Who will ſhew us any good? But Lord, Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* This is a diſtinguiſhing thing: Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, are not. But the light of God's coun-

countenance is. Chriſtians, remember, that the outward things of a condition, are but common, without the Graces of the Condition.

13. This is good for a man in this life without diſpute, (*viz.*) To keep peace within, however things are without. A good Conſcience, is a good thing for a man in this life. An Heathen could ſay, as I told you before, *Intus ſi recte, ne labores*, If all be well within, never trouble thy ſelf. *Solomon* ſaith of a good *Conſcience*, that it *is a continual Feaſt*. A good Conſcience is an Heaven, and an evil one, is an Hell in this life.

14. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) For a man to keep himſelf, in a continual preparation for Death. This is good for a man without controverſy. And it will appear by theſe particulars.

1. It is not good for a man to live one hour in that eſtate, wherein he dare not dye. Dare you dye in an Unbelieving, and an Unregenerate Eſtate?

2. It is good for a man to dye daily, and to keep himſelf in a dying diſpoſition. When the Apoſtle ſaith, *Pray continually*, The meaning is, That we ſhould ſtill keep our hearts in a praying Frame. So, when we ſpeak of dying daily, The meaning is, That by daily meditation of, and preparation for, Death, we ſhould dye daily. A Lyon ſeldom ſeen, is the more terrible.

3. It is good for a man in this life, To do every thing ſo, as that it may hold an agreement with a dying condition. This is that we ſhould look to; Whether, in ſeek-

ſeeking the things of this life, we ſeek them ſo, as that our ſeeking, holds an agreement with a dying ſtate? Do you uſe the world, as though you uſed it not? Do you do every Duty, as if it were your dying Duty?

4. It is good for a man in this life, To live every day, as if it were his laſt day; and to be doing that every day, that we ſhould be found doing at our laſt day. Some think that good at Death, that they looked not upon as good in Life. O that men would conſider, that what is good at the laſt hour, muſt needs be good every hour! As on the contrary, What is evil at Death, muſt needs be evil in Life.

5. It is good for a man, ſo to live, that when he comes to die, he may have nothing to do but to die. It is a folly in many, to put off all, till Sickneſs and Death come. *Solomon* calleth upon men, *Eccleſ.* 12. 1. *To remember their Creator in the dayes of their youth.* It is a madneſs in people, to leave the hardeſt work, to the worſt and weakeſt State. To cloſe all: Let me tell you Chriſtians, That it is ſaid of *David*, that after he had ſerved his Generation, by the Will of God, (or, as ſome read it) After he had ſerved the Will of God in his Generation, he fell a ſleep. How many fall a ſleep, before they do their work? And put off their bodies, before they put off their ſins.

FINIS.